

Factors influencing the ways students develop intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China.

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### **Dedication**

For all the international school teachers and leaders inspired to develop students with an interculturally sensitive heart-set, mind-set and skill-set, I dedicate this dissertation to you. May it inspire you, and also help you discover strategies that may help create a school culture that facilitates the development of student intercultural sensitivity. School leaders and staff have a lasting impact on the lives of students and are in a position to shape school culture. By being intentional and purposeful, it's possible to create the environment for the development of student intercultural sensitivity to take place within our classrooms, hallways, fields and stages each and every day.

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to examine high school teacher, parent, and student views of factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China. Evidenced by the growth of K-12 international schools around the world, an intercultural education appears to be of value to an increasing number of families. Eleven teachers, 11 parents, and 16 students, for a total of 38 participants were interviewed, through seven structured focus group interviews and four individual follow-up interviews to explore themes related to this study's four research questions. From this qualitative study, themes emerged indicating a unique set of both individual and institutional factors converging in schools that influence the development of student intercultural sensitivity.

Teachers, parents and students indicate that intercultural sensitivity is developed through significant immersion experiences and interactions with others from different cultures. Individual factors influencing intercultural sensitivity are related to parents, contact with one's home culture, diverse friends, motivation, family intercultural experiences, second language ability and student technology use. Institutional factors influencing student intercultural sensitivity are organizational policies, natural unforced activities such as co-curricular activities, school community events, a diverse teaching staff and student body, contact with host culture through class trips, the International Baccalaureate framework, and language classes. Findings lend support to Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) and that an international school environment fosters the development of intercultural sensitivity.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

A Senegalese poet said, “In the end we will conserve only what we love. We love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught.” We must learn about other cultures in order to understand, in order to love, and in order to preserve our common world heritage (Fishman & Garcia, 2011, p. 68).

#### **Rationale for the Study**

The economic, cultural, social and political forces of globalization have led to a growing intensification of connections among people in today’s world. The world is described as becoming a “flat world,” “one-world,” “one social space,” and “filling up” (Bauman, 2003; Boli & Petrova, 2007; Friedman, 2005). Researchers describe this process as globalization, which is a widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of modern-day social life and human culture (Giddens, 2003; Held & McGrew, 2003; Held, McGrew, Goldblatt & Perraton, 2003; Robinson, 2007). Globalization theorists describe the world as becoming interconnected by vast and intensive networks across all national borders, regions, and continents (Delanty & Rumford, 2007; Jones, 2010; Robertson & White, 2007).

Economic conditions are also changing. Markets are expanding and less restricted by national boundaries. Gibson-Graham (2006) explains that the world is rapidly being integrated into one economic space characterized by increased international trade, and the internationalization of production and financial markets promoting the internationalization of a commodity culture (p. 120). This has led to a growth of transnational corporations, which are perpetuating an increased international flow of goods, capital, labor and financial transactions (Hirst & Thompson, 2003). These

organizations are creating global factories that take advantage of local labor markets and are also supported by international financial institutions (Stormquist & Monkman, 2014).

Globalization has also impacted the world's once independent and diverse cultures. Globalization has brought people of different cultures closer together and with more frequent contact than ever before. As these cultures and people learn to co-exist with each other, some researchers describe the development of one single civilization (Cox & Schechter, 2002). Globalization is a subtle dynamic process that is gradually absorbing and homogenizing the cultural diversity of the world. It is a natural evolutionary process that is unavoidable and has become so ingrained that it has become a "life-cycle" (Caldwell & Lozada, 2007; Ritzer, 2007). These globalization trends, although a natural evolution of the world, are also being fueled at a faster pace because of advances in communication technologies such as cellular phones, satellite television and Internet expression (Appaduri, 1996; Stormquist & Monkman, 2014).

Political forces are moving more quickly and swiftly. Political change is able to sweep across countries in as little time as a few months. National borders are becoming more fluid due to the advances and decreasing costs in transportation. People and ideas move more freely. Not to be confused with nationalism, there is a loosening of the relationship between individuals and the state. The state is able to exert less control over people and institutions, while they have become more independent and unrestricted (Bauman, 2002; Cox & Schechter, 2002). Bauman (2002) claims in *Society Under Siege* that borders are "tenuous, frail and porous" and the global flows of people across borders are lessening the importance of the nation-state's control over the economy, thus

dissolving “national” cultures (p. 13).

As time moves forward, so do the economic, cultural, social and political forces of globalization constantly pushing and pulling at all aspects of contemporary life, including governments, institutions, organizations, cultures, families and schools. It is challenging all of them to function in new ways. Narrowing the focus, these globalization trends have significant implications for schools and modern-day educational practices. They have necessitated the need and increased the urgency for schools to develop students with a new kind of knowledge and set of skills (The RSA, 2015). Today’s students are facing an ambiguous world and schools are preparing students for a future that is unpredictable. To prepare students for this uncertain world, researchers are calling upon schools to integrate new educational practices that promote a certain mind-set and skill-set valuable for success in this globalized interconnected world, commonly referred to as twenty-first century competencies and skills (McTighe & Curtis, 2016; National Research Council, 2012; Zhao, 2012).

Referring to what he calls the “global achievement gap,” Wagner (2008) emphasizes the need for schools to focus curriculum on twenty-first century “survival skills.” Wagner (2008) argues that the global achievement gap is growing and a focus on the competencies, skills and attitudes students need to be successful in today’s global economy is long overdue. Today’s graduates will enter an increasingly interconnected fast-paced world with increased diversity and complexity (Walker, 2006). In order to be successful, experience in collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, cultural sensitivity, teamwork, problem solving and conflict resolution are valuable (The RSA, 2015;

Wagner, 2008). Zhao (2012) complements this perspective by arguing for the need of an education paradigm that cultivates creative entrepreneurship and global competence.

Brown, Lauder, & Ashton (2008) contend the main drivers of economic prosperity of individuals, corporations and nations is individual expertise, knowledge and creativity.

The National Research Council of the National Academies, advisers to the United States on science, engineering and medicine also recognize the economic, environmental, and social challenges of our world. They recommend a shift to the teaching of twenty-first century competencies. Organized around broad themes, these twenty-first century competencies include collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, communication cognitive, and intercultural understanding. This recommendation is further supported by the U.S. Committee for Economic Development, which states people should be equipped with the appropriate cultural knowledge and skills to compete globally (as cited in Sptizberg & Changon, 2009, p. 4).

To develop these competencies and dispositions schools are shifting towards a new paradigm for educating students, which includes developing students with trans-disciplinary skills that they can apply independently, in a variety of settings and across subjects or disciplines (McTighe & Curtis, 2016, p. 57). Schools are moving away from old behaviorist educational pedagogies and practices that emphasize student mastery of content to new pedagogies, characterized by deep learning where students create and use new knowledge in the world (The RSA, 2015). At an increasing rate, schools are being challenged to develop interculturally sensitive global citizens, for which there has been a significant increase in the growth of schools with an international and intercultural

orientated mission. A functionalist perspective on the role of education argues that education exists in “a highly industrialized, technological, modern society to develop the attitudes and skills that are appropriate for a changing economic and social world” (Feinburg & Soltis, 2009, p. 41). Therefore, considering the changing global world of today, it is valuable to further examine how these intercultural attitudes and competencies are being developed in the educational context.

Parents, the main consumers of education for their children, endorse the need for a new set of depositions and competencies essential for an increasing global and multicultural society. There is compelling evidence to support that they are the main drivers behind the demand for schools that promote the teaching and learning of such abilities (Chen, 1997). Specific to international schools, this growth in demand stems from the increased mobility of employees working for transnational corporations (Cambridge, 2013). However, more significant is the emergence of an economic middle class in countries with fast growing economies who have the funds for private education and who see the value in an English-medium education (Bates, 2011; Brown & Lauder, 2009; Walker & Cheong, 2009). By 2030 1.2 billion people in developing countries or 15% of the world population will belong to the global middle class. For example, by 2020 it is predicted that 48% of the Chinese population will be considered middle class (Brown & Lauder, 2009).

Since the turn of the millennium there has been a continuous expansion of English-medium international schools worldwide whose missions have been to develop global citizens. Unlike in the 1960's when the first international schools began out of the need



to serve small communities of expatriate students, today's international schools are increasingly serving local students whose parents are searching for an alternative to local education systems (Cambridge, 2002). International Schools Consultancy claimed that in 2008 only about 20% of students in international schools were from expatriate families, and that the remaining 80% drawn were from the wealthiest 5% of local populations (as cited in Walker & Cheong, 2009, p. 44).

Interestingly today of the 8,231 international schools, over half or 4,433 of these schools are located in Asia (66). English, as Hayden and Thompson (2008) argue is the current *lingua franca* of global business. Being bilingual and fluent in English is viewed not only as an asset for job advancement, but cultural capital especially in Asia. Correspondingly Brown and Lauder (2009), link the asset of attending an international school to acceptance at elite universities, entry into the labor market and ultimately access to the transnational ruling class (p. 135). These schools provide an attractive option for parents who have the desire to increase their child's cultural capital and find success in the modern-day world. There is evidence to support that their demand for an international education will only increase in the years ahead (Brummitt, 2016; Brummitt & Keeling, 2013).

In 1964 there were only 50 international schools around the world. By the year 1995 this number had grown to over 1000 schools (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). In the year 2000 there were 2,584 schools increasing to 8,231 in 2016 (Brummitt, 2016). The global forecast for international school growth in the next decade is predicted to increase at unprecedented rates. The International School Consultancy (ISC), the leading provider

of market intelligence for the international school market predicts that international schools will grow to 11,208 in 2021 and 16,154 in 2026 (Brummitt, 2016). Likewise, international school student enrollment will climb from 4.16 million in 2016 to 5.99 million in 2021 and 8.75 million students in 2026. To support increased enrollment international school staff will increase from 383,609 staff in 2016 to 543,621 in 2021 to 780,181 staff in 2026 (Brummitt, 2016). From a financial perspective the international school market has also grown to become a multi-billion dollar global industry with fee incomes increasing from \$4.9 billion USD in 2000 to \$39 billion USD in 2016 (Brummitt, 2016). This is predicted to increase to \$60.1 billion USD in 2021 and \$89.3 billion USD in 2026 (Brummitt, 2016).

Analogous to this growth of international schools, has been a rapid expansion of international curricula such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) programs which promote the development of *international mindedness* in students participating in their programs. International mindedness is knowledge of global issues and their interdependence, cultural differences, and critical thinking skills to analyze and propose solutions (Hill, 2012; Poltkin, 2013). In recent years the rate of student enrollment in IB programs has increased at a steady rate of 10% annually (Tarc, 2009). The most popular International Baccalaureate program offered by international schools is the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IBDP) with 1,370 schools offering this program in 2016 to their 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders (Brummitt, 2016).

Evidenced by this demand, stakeholders clearly value learning in schools with a global oriented or intercultural mission. Since these stakeholders are also the same

people who define and drive a school community, it is a viable idea to further examine their views about what they believe contributes to a successful learning experience to develop student intercultural sensitivity. In a diverse setting like international schools, stakeholders come from many different cultures with diverse experiences. If their views are understood by school leaders, this has the potential to guide and influence best practices in schools.

For the purposes of this study, intercultural sensitivity is assumed to be a major learning goal of an international school education. The development of student intercultural sensitivity and leading an intercultural orientated school mission presents challenges for school leaders. Bolman and Deal (2008) discuss the importance of leaders understanding the cultural, structural and relational frame of leadership. This has added significance when considering the diversity of schools with diverse teachers, parents and students as stakeholders. With regard to facilitating the development of student intercultural sensitivity, understanding global trends, along with the national and local context of where a school is located are considered important. Dorfman et al. (2012) describe that for leaders to be effective in different contexts their behavior needs to align with the expectations of their followers. By understanding the views of school stakeholders and making reflective data-based decisions, school leaders can position themselves to be facilitators of change, architects of school culture, leaders of learning, leaders of professional development and strategic communicators of mission, such as developing intercultural sensitivity in students. (Seward International, 2007).

## **The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine high school teacher, parent and student views of the factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China.

## **Research Questions**

This study addresses the following four research questions.

1. How do teachers, parents and students at an international school in China define student intercultural sensitivity?
2. What are the similarities and differences among teacher, parent and student views of the ways student intercultural sensitivity is developed at an international school in China?
3. What are teacher, parent and student views regarding individual factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China?
4. What are teacher, parent and student views regarding institutional factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China?

As the forces of globalization place pressure on schools, student intercultural sensitivity is becoming more recognized as an essential 21<sup>st</sup> century competency. Because school stakeholder views may be influenced by personal factors as well as institutional factors they could hold multiple meanings of what student intercultural sensitivity means and how it is developed. Creswell (2014) says that people seek to make

meaning of their world and have subjective and multiple meanings in doing so. This research attempts to help better understand student intercultural sensitivity from the point of view of individuals, in this case high school teachers, parents and students, and how they make sense of it.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Culture:** Described by Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) culture is a collective phenomenon among people who live or have lived within the same social environment and share similar patterns of thinking, feeling and acting.

**Globalization:** Globalization is “a widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life” and human culture (Antonio, 2007; Held, McGrew, Goldblatt & Perraton, 2003; Robinson, 2007).

**International Baccalaureate Organization:** The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) is a non-profit educational foundation founded in 1968. It offers four international education programs whose goal is “to develop the intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills needed to live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world. Schools must be authorized, by the IBO organization, to offer any of the programs” (The International Baccalaureate, n.d.).

**Intercultural Communication:** Intercultural communication is communication between different cultures (Bennett, 1998).

**Intercultural Competence:** Intercultural competence is the ability to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways (Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman, 2003). It is also “a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective

and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts” (J.M. Bennett, 2009, p. 122).

**Intercultural Learning:** Intercultural learning is the educational practices in K - 12th grade schools and higher education that prepare students to be intellectually competent ethical citizens of the world. Intercultural learning facilitates the development of the intercultural understandings, competencies, attitudes, skills, reflection, sensitivity, languages, participation and identities necessary for intercultural engagement and communication (Bennett, 2013; Heyward, 2002).

**Intercultural Sensitivity:** This study combines the Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) and Chen (1997) definitions of intercultural sensitivity. Intercultural sensitivity is “the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural difference” (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003). It is an individual’s ability to "develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promote an appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication" (Chen, 1997). This research considers intercultural sensitivity an antecedent to intercultural competence.

**International School:** For the purpose of this study the same definition of an *international school* used by The International School Consultancy (ISC) for market intelligence, analysis and data collection is used. A school is considered an international school “if the school delivers a curriculum to any combination of preschool, primary, or secondary students, wholly or partly in English outside an English-speaking country or if a school in a country where English is one of the official languages, offers an English-medium curriculum other than the country’s national curriculum and is international in its orientation. The definition of an international school is further informed by the RSA

(2015) definition of an international school. The RSA (2015) argues that all international schools have four characteristics. International schools have 1) a diverse mix of nationalities of students, 2) international governance through professional bodies like Educational Collaborative for International Schools (ECIS), or East Asia Regional for the Council of Schools (EARCOS), 3) an international teaching cadre, and 4) an international curriculum offering an international perspective.

**Modern Learning:** In this study the term *modern learning* is used interchangeably with the term *21st century learning*. Considering that it is already the 21st century, the use of *21st century learning* is no longer relevant to describe or envision what future learning should look like. *21st century learning* was a term used to spur change and a sense of urgency in schools. *Modern learning* is relevant for 2019 where many of the aspects of 21st century learning are already in place in schools. *Modern learning* is a term that describes learning important for today, while also still maintaining a connection to the future (McTighe & Curtis, 2016).

**Third Culture Kid (TCK):** Defined by Pollock and Van Reken (1999), “A third-culture kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background.”

**Twenty-first Century Competencies and Skills:** Twenty-first century competencies and skills refer to a set of cognitive, intra-personal, and inter-personal

skills, attitudes, behaviors and capabilities that authors argue students should acquire through school in order to be successful in this current modern century. This list includes, but is not limited to competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, intellectual openness, cultural appreciation, teamwork, collaboration, problem solving and critical thinking (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2013).

### **The Context and Significance of the Study**

The location for this study is at large American international school in the city of Shanghai, China, a vibrant, modern metropolis, which serves as the financial and commerce center for The People's Republic of China. The American international school is a private English-language, coeducational day school offering an American curriculum pre-kindergarten through grade 12. Within the flourishing international school marketplace in Shanghai, this school holds the unique position of being the oldest international school in the city, having been established in 1912.

The context of this American international school in Shanghai is suitable for this study, because it's mission implies many of the goals of intercultural sensitivity and is similar to many other international schools with a global-oriented mission. The school's mission describes inspiring students' passion for learning, encouraging them to live their dreams and teaching students to act with integrity and compassion (China Intercultural School, n.d.). A demonstration of the school's commitment to student intercultural sensitivity development is visible through its core values asserting that, "embracing diversity enriches individuals and communities" and references to the development of ethical global citizenship as a long-term transfer learning goal for its students (China



Intercultural School, n.d.). The school's curriculum inspires students to be global citizens who have a duty to care for the earth and its inhabitants ensuring the well-being of humankind (China Intercultural School, n.d.).

Further evidence of the school's commitment to facilitating student intercultural sensitivity is reflected by the organizations in which they are affiliated, accredited and serve as a resource to guide learning and organizational culture. The school is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in the USA and is authorized to teach the IB Diploma Program in Grades 11 and 12 by the International Baccalaureate Organization. The International Baccalaureate curriculum has a clear international orientation, offering a high quality international educational program currently offered in over 146 countries to over one million students (International Baccalaureate Organization, n.d.). The school is a member of the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS), whose focus is to help member schools, "promote intercultural understanding and international friendship through the activities of member schools" (East Asia Regional Council of Schools, n.d.). The school is also a member of the Council of International Schools (CIS), whose similar vision is, "to inspire the development of global citizens through high quality international education: connecting ideas, cultures and educators from every corner of the world" (Council of International Schools, n.d.). Finally, the school holds a membership with the Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools (NESA). In addition to its mission to serve member schools, NESA believes that, "diversity strengthens us, and prepares us for an increasingly complex world" (Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools, n.d.).

Beginning in the 2017-18 school year, the school engaged in a process of identifying school-wide transdisciplinary learning impacts for its students.

Transdisciplinary learning impacts are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes a student can transfer to new and unfamiliar settings, both in and outside of school, which are also reflected in the school's mission and values (McTighe & Curtis, 2016, p. 25). In addition to developing graduates who are skillful communicators, effective collaborators, creative learners, critical thinkers, the school seeks to develop students who have the attitudes, skills and abilities to be an ethical global citizen. The school defines ethical global citizenship as a student who, "takes action based on informed decisions filtered through empathy, integrity, sustainability, and social justice. Students acknowledge and respect perspectives and cultures with consideration and care. They take action with honesty and sincerity. They make decisions and take actions to impact sustainability significantly. Finally, ethical global citizens, as defined by the school, engage in authentic opportunities to impact others positively" (China Intercultural School, 2018).

The school's diverse student body also adds value for the location of this study. In the 2017-18 school year, the school enrolled approximately 2800 students from over 44 different nationalities. The school enrolls students from families in the international business and diplomatic communities in Shanghai, China and is representative of the diversity of its stakeholders. 1,055 companies with headquarters outside of the United States have families whose children attend the school representing, 59% of all students (China Intercultural School, 2017). The top employers for parents of students are

General Motors, Ford Motor Co., Disney, Johnson and Johnson and Apple (China Intercultural School, 2017).

Beginning in the 1990's, due to China's rapid industrial expansion and modernization, there was a significant increase in foreign investment from multinational corporations in China. The city of Shanghai was at the center of this investment, resulting in an increased demand for seats at international schools for the children of these expatriate workers. The school's enrollment peaked during the 2012-2013 school year with 3,365 students. However, in recent years, as multinational corporations have changed their China strategy, there has been a reduction of foreign nationals working in China and the number of expatriate students has consequentially declined. These positions are now being filled with children of Chinese nationals returning to China after having studied or worked abroad. As a result, the number of culturally ethnic Chinese students has grown as these families are attracted to an international education for their children.

Nonetheless, the school's student body is still diverse. The top five student nationalities represented by passport for the 2017-18 school year are USA 52.7%, Hong Kong 8.6%, Canada 7.5%, China 5.9%, and Taiwan 4.8%. Over the past 5 years, 42% of student applicants previously attended another international school in Shanghai, while 27% came from a school based in the USA or Canada. A further 13% came from Hong Kong, Macau or Taiwan. The transient nature and global mobility of the student body is also reflected in enrollment data that indicates 32% of students when leaving the school transfer to another country to continue their education (China Intercultural School, 2017).

Eighty-two percent of the school's faculty are expatriate overseas-hire teachers with 62% coming from the USA, 10% from China, 10% from Canada, eight percent from Australia and New Zealand and four percent from the UK. A similar diversity is reflected in the administrative staff, with the majority of administration coming from USA, Canada and Australia.

Like this school and also confirmed by Westrick (2005) many international schools profess intercultural sensitivity as an important outcome of its international school education. Evidence of intercultural sensitivity being a learning goal of an international education can be found reflected in numerous international school mission, vision or value statements (Heyward, 2000). A few examples are reviewed below.

The International School of Bangkok's states that their school's mission is to, "inspire students to achieve their academic potential, be passionate, reflective learners, become caring global citizens, lead healthy, active, balanced lives" (International School Bangkok, n.d.).

The International School of Geneva, one of the original international schools founded in 1924 and often considered the "first international school" describes their educational aim as, preparing "students for membership of communities that are socially and culturally diverse, for citizenship, and for engagement with the political, ethical and environmental challenges of their times. We expect them to want to take an active part in making their world a better place and one that is based on the mutual understanding, respect and shared values to which the school has been committed throughout its long history" (International School of Geneva, n.d.).

The United World College described as an educational movement and network of 17 international schools and committees in more than 150 countries has a mission to unite “people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future” (United World College, n.d.).

The vision of The International School of Beijing educating more than 1,700 students in Beijing, China since 1980 aspires, “to actively promote global understanding and respect within and between cultures” (International School of Beijing, n.d.).

Likewise, the International School of Brussels (ISB) where students from over 70 different countries attend, claim in their mission that, “the ISB learning experience is shaped by a spirit of community, characterized by students, parents, faculty and staff working together to achieve our goal of developing independent learners and international citizens” (International School Brussels, n.d.).

The China Intercultural School core values are centered around the beliefs that, “embracing diversity enriches individuals and communities, acts of compassion and generosity of spirit create a better world, and as global citizens we have a duty to care for the earth and its inhabitants to ensure the well-being of humankind” (China Intercultural School, n.d.).

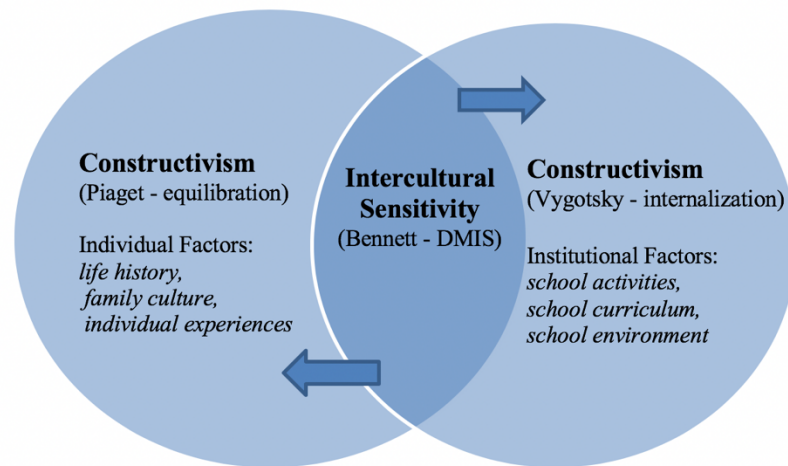
Yet, no research was found that examines school teacher, parent and student views on what factors they believe actually facilitate the development of student intercultural sensitivity in international schools. In addition to suggesting more empirical studies relate to understanding the different approaches to develop intercultural sensitivity, Perry

and Southwell (2011) also suggest a need for more studies related to school-aged children and youths. Therefore, this study examines, in addition to teachers and parents, the views of high school students.

Stakeholder demand for an international education is driving the international school market demonstrated by international school growth around the world. By understanding stakeholder views, international school leaders will better understand what is valued by consumers of international schools in regards to student intercultural sensitivity. Thus, they will be more prepared to lead the development of intercultural sensitivity in their schools and strengthen the value proposition of their individual schools.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

This study is framed by constructivist learning theory relying specifically on the theories of Piaget (1936) and Vygotsky (1994b). Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) is used as the conceptual model for understanding the stages and development of student intercultural sensitivity. This development is influenced by both individual and institutional factors and the goal of the research is to capture school stakeholder views about how and what specific factors influence this development. To understand the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of this study a Venn diagram is used and depicted in Figure 1 below.



*Figure 1.* Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks.

This figure represents the influence of individual and institutional factors on the development of intercultural sensitivity.

Intercultural sensitivity is the focus of this study and therefore represented as the center inner core of the Venn diagram. The expansion of this inner space, either to the left or to the right, is controlled by the factors which have more influence over the development of intercultural sensitivity. If there is more influence by individual factors such as personal life histories, family culture or individual experiences, then the inner core extends to capture more space and area to the left representing this influence. Likewise, with more influence by institution factors such as school leadership, school environment, programs, policy or curriculum, then the area expands to capture more space to the right, representing the impact of institutional factors. One can also look at the inner core in relation to size. The larger the area of the inner circle, the more influence both individual and institutional factors are assumed to have on the

development of intercultural sensitivity. The smaller the inner circle, the less influence these factors have on its development.

## **Conclusion**

“Young people across the globe today face an uncertain future: economic instability, stubbornly poor social mobility, the challenges of increasing population diversity and growth, climate change and a whole raft of pressures that come from rapid globalization” (The RSA, 2015, p.10). Correspondingly, Richard Pearce (2013) in *International Education and Schools – Moving Beyond the First 40 Years*, in describing the historical evolution of international education challenges school leaders to develop schools that promote deep learning through authentic content. McTighe and Curtis (2016) also endorse this idea, stating that, “a modern curriculum should reflect our mission of preparing students to apply their learning to the unpredictable opportunities and challenges they will face” (p. 66). In order to meet the challenges students face today and in the future, the urgency exists for school leaders to strive towards creating a learning community that cultivates creativity, entrepreneurship, critical thinking, action and intercultural sensitivity. Although helpful, to develop students who are true global citizens, service-learning projects, language instruction or words in a mission statement, may not be enough for a school. It seems a more purposeful, consistent and meaningful approach, with a goal of helping to create a more just world for all is of value. Examining and understanding diverse school stakeholder views regarding how intercultural sensitivity is developed within one international school is one first step in that process.



## Chapter Two

### Review of the Literature

#### Introduction

This study is organized around three major bodies of literature, of which all three are reviewed in this chapter. The conceptual flow of the literature review is depicted below in Figure 2 and begins with a review of constructivist learning theory. It establishes constructivism as a relevant lens in which to understand how intercultural sensitivity is constructed and internalized by learners. Constructivist learning theory is based on the belief that reality and knowledge is constructed through human activity and interactions with each other. The theory suggests that a learner's individual personal history and the external environment in which learning takes place are important to the learning process (Kim, 2001). Secondly, this chapter reviews the literature related to the paradigms, principles and practices of intercultural communication, specifically explaining the difference between intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence. This study is founded on the premise that intercultural sensitivity is a relevant intended and unintended trans-disciplinary outcome of K-12 education curriculum. This chapter concludes with a review of the literature related to leadership for school transformation.



*Figure 2.* The conceptual flow of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

## **Constructivist Learning Theory**

The theory of learning called constructivism developed out of the work of Jean Piaget (1936) and Lev Vygotsky (1994b) and is a learning theory that describes how knowledge and understanding is constructed in the minds of learners (Fosnot & Perry, 1996). Described by Doll (1993), constructivist learning theory defines learning as an active process where learners interact with their physical and social environments in an “interpretive, recursive, and non-linear” way (as cited by Fosnot & Perry, 1996, p. 29). Constructivist theorist Von Glasersfeld (1995) emphasizes that knowledge can only be constructed based on a person’s experiences or what they already know, also called prior-knowledge. Naylor and Keogh (1999) add support to this notion, adding that learning is an active process where the learner constructs meaning by linking new knowledge to existing knowledge. Instead of viewing knowledge as a commodity that is mechanically transmitted through reinforcement and repetition in stages of maturation, constructivist learning theory focuses on cognitive development and deep understanding through active learner reorganization that is complex and non-linear (Fosnot & Perry, 1996).

As confidence in behaviorist learning theory weakened in the western world in 1970-1980, constructivism emerged as the primary doctrine in education and teacher preparation programs. Although a major part of North American university undergraduate educational programs, constructivism is not a theory about teaching, it is a theory about learning (Fosnot & Perry, 1996). Consequently, for the purposes of this study and understanding how student intercultural sensitivity develops in a school setting, constructivist learning theory serves as a useful framework.

Combining both Piaget's (1936) and Vygotsky's (1994b) theories of learning, constructivists believe in both the internal individual construction of knowledge, as well as the external interactive social context necessary for learning to take place. Liu and Matthews (2005) refer to this concept as the "cartesian mind-body dualism." Individual constructivism also called cognitive constructivism or personal constructivism emphasizes that learners are builders of their own cognitive tools, and knowledge is not something that exists outside of the learner, but rather develops internally within each person, or in other words, in their mind. This focus on the individual aspect of constructivism is based largely on the work of Piaget (1936).

Second to this aspect, constructivists also believe that learning is a very social endeavor. They believe that learning is the product of human interaction where knowledge is socially and culturally constructed influenced by the environment of where learning takes place, or as Ackermann (2001) describes as "situated." This is referred to as social constructivism and based on the work of Vygotsky. Since this research considers how intercultural sensitivity is developed within the minds of students in the setting of an international school, Ackermann's (2001) "situated" concept appears to lend support to using constructivist learning theory to help explain how the phenomenon of student intercultural sensitivity is developed within the context of a school setting.

**Piaget.** Piaget's (1936) work is relevant to this research, because rather than examining what exactly children know or when they know it, Piaget studies how children come to arrive at what they know (Mooney, 2013). This is what this study attempts to do. It examines how children acquire becoming interculturally sensitive. Piaget believes

that children *construct* their own knowledge internally by attaching meaning to the things they are exposed to in their environment. Piaget's (1936) theory underscores the natural biological evolution of the individual mind and views this cognitive development in the same way as the biological-physical evolution of any organism. He maintains the development of the human mind is predestined, but is constantly transforming and changing in a search to find equilibrium as it is exposed to new environments, surroundings and experiences (Fosnot & Perry, 1996, Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002, Pass, 2004). This idea is referred to as "equilibration" and described by Piaget as a "dynamic process of self-regulated behavior balancing two intrinsic polar behaviors, assimilation and accommodation" (Fosnot & Perry, 1996). Piaget (1936) argues that knowledge construction takes place when a learner is exposed to new knowledge and through a non-linear dynamic process attempts to assimilate or "make similar" this new information. Accommodation is the subsequent process of integrating the new knowledge into existing structures of knowledge through reflection, adaptation, organization, growth and change (Fosnot & Perry, 1996, Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). Simply put, Piaget's (1936) theory implies individual learning or knowledge construction takes place explicitly inside the mind of the learners through their interaction with their environment.

Other relevant concepts of Piaget's theory that appear to connect with understanding the development of student intercultural sensitivity relate to how the mind develops through different stages and sequences referred to as the chronological stages of development (Pass, 2004). Piaget (1936) believes that learners all pass through the same stages when developing their learning and the age at which this develops can vary for the

individual learner. Described by Gredler (1997), Piaget proposes four chronological stages of reasoning development: sensorimotor, birth to 1.5 years; preoperational, from 2-3 to 7-8 years, concrete operational, 7-8 to 12-14 years; and formal operational, older than 14 years (as cited in Pass, 2004, p. 111). Piaget is less interested in how the actual child develops, but rather how knowledge is constructed inside the mind of the child. He believes for that to happen, the cognitive structures of the mind must also be disturbed so the mind is forced open and made available to develop new possibilities (Devries, 2000; Fosnot & Perry, 1996).

This disruption is a key concept in understanding Piaget's (1936) theory connection to this study. Piaget's theory lends support to the idea that educators cannot *teach* students to become interculturally sensitive, but suggests they can design the learning environment in such a way that allows for students to develop and construct intercultural sensitivity in their own way. Similarly, in describing the U.S. study-abroad narrative regarding intercultural learning, Vande Berg (2009) states that students developed interculturally through being immersed and exposed to things that are new and different. This increased intercultural sensitivity takes place not merely by being exposed to another culture, but by students' actively reflecting, engaging and trying out new hypotheses during the learning experience. Linking Bennett's (1998) description of cultural adaptation, as students have more and more intercultural experiences, intercultural sensitivity develops in much the same way as Piaget describes learning, as progressing through stages and developing on its own.

**Vygotsky.** While Piaget's theory focuses on the internal, individual, personal

construction of understanding in the learning process, Vygotsky's (1994b) theory focuses on the external and social aspect of learning, more specifically the interaction between the individual and the external environment (DeVries, 2000; Pass, 2004; Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002; Vygotsky, 1994a). These two theories complement each other in helping to understand the development of student intercultural sensitivity. Vygotsky believes that independent to Piaget's emphasis on individual development, there are external factors that come from the environment and influence learning (DeVries, 2000). Vygotsky's (1994b) theory is based on the belief that children's learning is shaped by their families, communities, socioeconomic status, education and culture (Mooney, 2013; Vygotsky, 1994a). Arguing in *The Socialist Alteration of Man*, Vygotsky (1994b) describes his theory emphasizing the power of human relationships and the influence of social relationships on the development of human personality (p. 181). Vygotsky (1994b) also argues that education plays a vital role in altering the natural "historical human type" (p. 181). As humans take the natural course of evolution they are not programmed to understand, appreciate or respect cultural differences. Confirmed by Bennett (1998), the basic human instinct is to avoid cultural difference. Connecting with Vygotsky's terminology of the "historical human type," humans are not designed to be interculturally sensitive to others. Therefore, the social setting of a school, where diverse groups come together, may play an important role in developing this sensitivity.

Vygotsky (1994b) also believes that learning advances through stages. Similar to Piaget's concept of chronological stages of development, Vygotsky emphasizes the social influence of learning through his concept of zones of proximal development (ZPD).

However unlike Piaget, Vygotsky does not assign actual age constraints to the different stages. Vygotsky describes the zones of proximal development as, “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (as cited in DeVries, 2000, p. 195). The zone of proximal development “is the difference between the knowledge a child can obtain on her/his own and the knowledge that a child can obtain with the help off the social other” (Pass, 2004, p. xvii). Vygotsky details four stages of development; primary differentiation, real instrumental, secondary differentiation, and differentiation. Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development concept appears to suggest that when considering the development of student intercultural sensitivity, the social setting and adult guidance can influence it.

A second concept of learning described by Vygotsky and similar to Piaget’s concept of “equilibration” is his idea of “internalization.” Internalization is the process a person goes through to understand something and is different from equilibration, because internationalization is about the “rotation in” of concepts from the external environment (DeVries, 2000; Pass, 2004). Further to this idea, Vygotsky in discussing the acquisition of academic concepts in school age children states that for a concept to take hold in a child's consciousness it must go through a complicated physiological process including “voluntary attention, logical memory, abstraction, comparison and differentiation” (Vygotsky, 1994b, p. 184). Applying this notion to schools and the development of student intercultural sensitivity this may suggest that students develop intercultural

sensitivity by rotating in ideas or experiences they are exposed to at school or from peers. It may also put forth the idea that students must be open to and attentive to these intercultural opportunities.

Vygotsky's (1994b) and Piaget's (1936) theories are the foundation on which constructivism is built and have relevant implications for guiding educational practice and structures in schools. In the case of this study, their theories are a foundation for understanding the individual and institutional factors that influence the development of student intercultural sensitivity.

Summarized by Jones and Brader-Araje (2002), the greatest impact of constructivism on education is that it emphasizes learning and the construction of new knowledge as an active dynamic process. Therefore, a constructivist may believe that the development of intercultural sensitivity requires the student to be actively engaged in the process. One cannot sit passively to the side and expect to become interculturally sensitive, by only collecting cultural facts or cultural specific information. Learning is not a commodity that is to be collected or is it an individual endeavor. It appears to require a larger social community where new learning builds upon prior knowledge in a non-linear way (Fosnot & Perry, 1996).

### **Intercultural Communication Theory**

Throughout history people of different cultures have always come in contact with each other in a variety of ways. From the time of the seafaring Vikings and European explorers conquering new lands, to more recent events like American servicemen in Iraq or Somalian immigrants in Minnesota, USA, people around the world are being forced



closer together. Today people of different ethnic and national heritages have more contact with each other than ever before. They are living in “global villages” in both real and virtual environments (Fantini, 2009; Bennett, 1998, 2010). These intercultural encounters are no longer hindered by time and space or confined to only tourists, business people or diplomats. It has become increasingly common to find neighbors who speak a different language, practice a different religion and approach life in different ways (Barnlund, 1998). For example, in the United Kingdom, in 2001 9% of residents were born outside of the UK compared to 13% in 2011, with the most common non-UK countries of birth being India, Poland and Pakistan (Office of National Statistics, 2012). By living in closer proximity to cultural diversity, both physically and virtually, people today are challenged to find ways to connect, communicate and understand each other.

Unfortunately, history provides evidence that most intercultural interactions between people have not been successful or positive. Milton Bennett (2013) affirms that sensitivity to those from another culture is not natural and is not part of our primate past. Ashwill & Oanh (2009) state that “cross-cultural contact usually has been accompanied by bloodshed, oppression, or genocide” (p. 145). It is natural to perceive what is foreign as a threat to one’s own identity and view one’s own cultural beliefs and practices as universal (Kalscheuer, 2014). There is evidence that religious missionaries and colonists, rather than seeking to understand those who were different, instead imposed their political, economic and religious beliefs on those they encountered (Bennett, 1998). Spurred on by globalization Hofstede et al. (2010) further explain that, “the world is full of confrontations between people, groups and nations who think feel and act differently”

(p. 4). History suggests and is confirmed by Bennett (2013) that cross-cultural contact alone is useless in the development of sensitivity to other cultures. Paige (1993a) supports this notion, arguing that for the effective development of intercultural sensitivity it has to be intentional and taught.

Given that people have their own unique culture and assign value to that, how do people from different cultural groups become more respectful and sensitive in order to live in harmony with each other? Before understanding and respecting another person's culture, a person must first understand their own culture (Hall, 1959, p. 39). The understanding of culture is a key element of global citizenship and determining our relationship with each other (Walker, 2006, p. 25). Bennett (1993) argues that the process for becoming more sensitive to other cultures and more comfortable with cultural difference takes time and is a developmental process. Adding urgency and support, Hofstede et al. (2010) contend patterns of thinking, feeling and acting are established at a young age and developed in early childhood.

**Definition of culture.** To fully understand intercultural sensitivity, first a solid understanding of the term *culture* is important. Edward T. Hall (1959) in *The Silent Language* emphasizes that acquiring culture is a learning process and culture is the learned behavior patterns, attitudes and material things (p. 20). When developing a concept of culture, Hofstede et al. (2010) in *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* describe culture as mental programming and use the analogy of the way a computer is programmed. The physical and social surroundings where this programming takes place is relevant. A person is programmed by the social environments in which they

grow up. That acquisition of one's culture is something that a person learns overtime and is not born with (Hofstede et al., 2010). Similar to the software placed inside of a computer, a person's culture is held within their mind and is developed by the social interactions that first begin with their family and continue with inputs from their neighborhood, school, workplace and community. Culture is a collective phenomenon among people who live or have lived within the same social environment and share similar patterns of thinking, feeling and acting (Hofstede et al., 2010).

In other words, the gaining of one's culture is a learning process. Essentially people are born ethnocentric and the extent to how ethnocentric they are, is linked to their culture, history and ideology of the country or geographical location they were socialized (Adler, 1997; Ashwill & Oahn, 2009). Throsby (1995) further confirms this idea defining culture as "a set of attitudes, practices and beliefs that are fundamental to the functioning of different societies. Culture in this sense is expressed in a particular society's values and customs, which evolve over time as they are transmitted from one generation to another" (p. 6). Similarly, to acquiring one's own culture is a learning process, so is the process of understanding a different culture and becoming more interculturally sensitive to it.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) in *The Social Construction of Reality* established a definition for culture that is commonly used by interculturalists. This definition breaks culture down into two parts, described as *objective* culture and *subjective* culture. Objective culture referred to by Milton Bennett (2013) as "Big-C" are the aspects of culture such as art, music, cuisine, architecture, history, literature, political and economic

systems. Similarly, Hall (1959) describes this as “overt culture” which are the elements of culture that are not a part of an individual’s awareness and reflection. Objective culture contributes to knowledge of culture, but it does not automatically transfer to increased intercultural communication skills, sensitivity or competence (Bennett, 1998). The aspects of objective culture are typically what is included as part of K - 12 school subjects and coursework. It is also these objective cultural aspects that are typically celebrated through food, and festivals.

In contrast, subjective culture is what Bennett (2013) refers to as “little-C” and is the worldview of a society’s people. Hall (1959) describes this as “covert culture” referring to a peoples’ common set of values and beliefs. Subjective culture are aspects of culture that lie within the psychological domain of people. It describes their everyday way of thinking and behaving (Bennett, 1998) or their “hidden code of behavior” (Kalscheuer, 1994, p. 176). Bennett (1998) defines subjective culture as “the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors and values of groups of interacting people” (p. 3). Bennett (1998) further claims that understanding subjective culture is what leads to increased intercultural sensitivity, competence and communication skills.

When defining culture most definitions also describe culture as existing and being contained within some type of boundary. This boundary is either a national political boundary, or a boundary defined by gender, region, vocation or ethnicity. It is within this boundary where the aspects of objective and subjective culture come together to form culture patterns which are then used in making cultural comparisons (E. Hall, 1959; Hofstede et al., 2010). Stressing the importance religion plays in defining culture, T.S.

Eliot in 1948 defined culture as “the way of life of a particular people living together in one place...made visible in their arts, social systems, in their habits and customs and religion” (as cited in Walker, 2006, p. 28).

**Intercultural sensitivity.** Numerous studies from a range of fields like, international management, international study abroad, international technology, medicine, and social work have identified intercultural sensitivity as fundamental for increasing understanding, improving business and improving relations among cultures (Bennett, 2013; Fantini, 2000; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). The increase of international travel, global management teams and growing ethnic diversity raises the importance of improving relationships between people (Antal & Friedman, 2008; Fantini, 2000). The success of relationships between people relies on the ability for people to understand and behave positively towards ethnic, religious, racial and cultural differences.

This concept of cultural differences and the importance of developing improved relationships through intercultural communication was first established by the work of Edward T. Hall in the 1950s during his work with the U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and outlined in Hall’s (1959) book *The Silent Language* (Jackson, 2014; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2014). As Bennett (1986b) later confirms, Hall (1959) believes that it is natural for people to assume that their own culture is the only real culture and people have little need to question what seems natural to them. People do not begin to move beyond an ethnocentric state of reflection on their own culture, until they are forced to interact with those outside of it and of a different culture. However, interaction alone

is not enough. Walker (2006) emphasizes that for people to develop and become more interculturally sensitive it does not happen through osmosis. It must be facilitated in some way.

Similar to what started in foreign service training, multinational corporations today have come to recognize the importance of training employees in an intercultural mindset that allows them to work collaboratively with a variety of individuals from different, cultures, religions and lifestyles (Wagner, 2008). These corporations have therefore invested effort and money in training programs for employees to gain these attitudes, skills and competencies. Not to be left to only corporations, Bennett (2013) argues that intercultural learning for the development of increased intercultural sensitivity is a crucial element of higher education.

In the United States one organization involved in intercultural training has been the nonprofit charity, Intercultural Communication Institute (ICI) in Portland, Oregon whose mission is to foster, “an awareness and appreciation of cultural difference in both the international and domestic arenas” (Intercultural Communication Institute, n.d.). The ICI sponsors intercultural training institutes for professionals and believes that furthering intercultural work contributes to an improved understanding between cultures and reduced conflict. Another organization is World Learning Inc., originally founded in 1932 as The Federation of the Experiment of International Living. Beginning with originally sending U.S. undergraduate students abroad, World Learning Inc. has expanded their programming to include graduate students and professionals (Fantini, 2000, The Experiment in International Living, 2016; World Learning, 2016). In Milan, Italy

another organization supporting research on the development of intercultural sensitivity in the public and private sectors worldwide is the Intercultural Development Research Institute founded by Milton Bennett (Intercultural Development Research Institute, n.d.).

The development of intercultural sensitivity cannot be a learning goal left only for organizations, governments or higher education. Strategies that lead to the development of intercultural sensitivity can begin in K – 12 schools (Perry & Southwell, 2011).

Ashwill & Oanh (2009) encourage the development of global competencies like intercultural sensitivity to extend to all sectors of society and not only the elite or college educated. Bennett (2013) supports this, encouraging intercultural sensitivity training be present in liberal arts education and K – 12 education. Zhao (2012) contends, “the most desirable education, is one that enhances human curiosity and creativity, encourages risk taking, and cultivates the entrepreneurial spirit in the context of globalization” (p. 17).

Similarly, Bennett (2013) states intercultural learning leads to intercultural sensitivity which encourages interdisciplinary thinking, critical thinking, and ethical action. The goal of intercultural learning is to increase a learner’s intercultural sensitivity. As Barnlund (1998) describes, “what seems most critical is to find way of gaining entrance into the assumptive world of another culture, to identify the norms that govern face-to-face relations and to equip people to function within a social system that is foreign but no longer incomprehensible” (p. 37).

Because a person is most available to learning and assimilating when they are young, K - 12 schools appear to be a natural environment to teach and begin developing this interculturally sensitive disposition. The functionalist view of school supports

socializing students into adapting to the economic, political and social institutions of a particular society (Feinburg & Soltis, 2009). Given today's increasing multicultural and global society, schools are adapting to reflect these changes (Walker, 2006). Through interviews with international school primary school leaders in Hong Kong, Walker and Cheong (2009) confirm that international schools are an ideal environment for promoting intercultural sensitivity and awareness. School leaders describe the diversity of students and staff from different backgrounds and cultures as an opportunity for fostering the development of knowledge and skills that are transferable across contexts and cultures.

Beginning with Bennett's (2010) statement to the Universidad 2010 7th International Congress on Higher Education regarding how liberal education prepares students to become ethical global citizens, the value of intercultural sensitivity appears to pair well with the missions of many K – 12 international schools. The idea that the main outcome of an international education is to develop students interculturally with the capabilities to successfully navigate life in a different culture other than their own is well documented in numerous school mission, vision and value statements, as well as in the international education literature (Hill, 2012; Pearce, 2013; Stagg, 2013; Tarc, 2009; Walker, 2006). It therefore appears that the ideas of international education and intercultural sensitivity are bound together. Heyward (2002) further contends that international schools are in a unique position for developing intercultural sensitivity and have a responsibility to do so in their curriculum and organizational structure.

Bennett (2010) adds that a focus on learning that leads to development of intercultural sensitivity contributes to a better world and increases the effectiveness of



communications in classrooms and school campuses. Secondly, Bennett (2010) states intercultural sensitivity is the outcome of intercultural learning which expresses the essence of social justice and human equality. Former director general of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) George Walker (2006) in *Educating the Global Citizen* also emphasizes that “the heart of international education lies in the appreciation of diversity” and challenging assumptions of prejudice (p.8). Similarly, the IBO’s mission acknowledges its programs aim, “to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect” (International Baccalaureate Organization, n.d.).

**Inconsistent use of terminology.** With the plethora of terms present in the intercultural communication literature, it is easy to become confused with the terminology and the different uses of the terms, especially, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness, and intercultural competence and intercultural communication. This is because researchers use these terms interchangeably, mingle them together, define them differently, use them incorrectly, or substitute one for the other. This is also due to the fact that the intercultural field is still evolving. (Chen, 1997; Fantini, 2006, 2009; Van de Vijver & Leung, 2009).

Chen and Starosta (1996) argue that these terms are closely related, however they are four separate concepts. Chen and Starosta (1996) state simply that intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness, and intercultural competence are all dimensions of intercultural communication. This research focuses on one of these three dimensions, which is intercultural sensitivity. Chen and Starosta (1996) explain that communicating

in an intercultural situation is a dynamic process, where one relies upon affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects for successful intercultural communication.

The affective aspect of this communication is the intercultural sensitivity that is relied upon during the interaction. Chen (1997) describes that intercultural sensitivity is, “the emotional desire of a person to acknowledge, appreciate, and accept cultural differences” (p. 5). The cognitive aspect of the interaction is applying intercultural awareness, during the interaction. Chen (1997) describes intercultural awareness as, “a person's ability to understand similarities and differences of others' cultures” (p. 5). The third dimension is the behavioral dimension, which refers to the intercultural competence applied during the interaction. Chen (1997) states that intercultural competence is “an individual's ability to reach communication goals, through verbal and nonverbal behaviors, while interacting with people from other cultures” (p. 5). Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) define intercultural sensitivity similar to Chen (1997), stating intercultural sensitivity is “the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences” and define intercultural competence as “the ability to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways” (p. 422). Fantini (2006) supports this definition of intercultural competence, linking *competence* to *performance*. Fantini (2006) states, “competence is abstract and cannot be witnessed directly; consequently, it must be inferred by observing how one performs. Hence, competence and performance are interrelated” (p. 2).

However, J. M. Bennett (2009) presents a similar definition as Chen and Starosta (1996), not for intercultural communication, but for intercultural competence. J. M.

Bennett (2009) states that, “there is clearly an emerging consensus around what constitutes intercultural competence, which is most often viewed as a set of cognitive, affective and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts.”

For the purpose of this study, the focus is on intercultural sensitivity. It considers that intercultural sensitivity best matches with the missions of international schools and is the desired student learning impact international schools are trying to develop. This research also contends that before intercultural competence can be realized, intercultural sensitivity must first be in place. This idea is supported by the Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) conceptualization of intercultural sensitivity that concludes that sensitivity comes before competence. It also supports the pathway of intercultural communication described by Chen (1997) and supported by Bennett (1993), that intercultural communication begins with intercultural sensitivity, moves to intercultural awareness and then ends with intercultural competence. Therefore, intercultural competence is discussed below, but should not be confused with the main objective of this study, which is to uncover and examine the phenomenon of intercultural sensitivity and how it is developed in an international school.

Clarity for the choice and focus on the terminology of international sensitivity for this study is further provided by Bennett (2013) stating in his discussion of intercultural sensitivity being an embodied experience (p. 20). This statement matches with constructivist learning theory discussed earlier and also how international educators describe their intercultural learning goals. Educators describe an international education

as “preparing students for integration into another culture” and enabling students “to find themselves at home in all cultures and human situations” (Walker, 2006). In describing a global citizen, a value expressed in many international school mission statements, Walker (2006) says an international orientated education is about helping students grasp another person’s values. Grasping another person’s values is reflective of becoming more interculturally sensitive to those values.

Becoming more intercultural sensitivity is not only about developing an alternative perspective, but rather an alternative experience. Bennett’s (2013) concept of *feelings* lends support to this idea, referring to both a physical sensation and also an intuition or embodiment in the mind. Similarly, Walker (2006) states, “it is not expected that students adopt alien points of view, merely that they are exposed to them and encouraged to respond intelligently. The end result, we hope, is a more compassionate population, a welcome manifestation of national diversity within an international framework of tolerant respect” (p. 33).

**Intercultural competence.** A review of the intercultural competence literature is helpful in further understanding why intercultural sensitivity is the focus of this study. In conceptualizing, intercultural competence, intercultural researches have taken a variety of approaches exploring definitions, characteristics and how it is developed. Bennett (2013) suggests, it is built on a relative and constructivist epistemology.

Beginning with the broad basic perspective, Fantini (2000) presents intercultural competence through three broad themes. Intercultural competence is the ability to 1) develop and maintain relationships, 2) communicate effectively and 3) cooperate with

others. More narrowly, Fantini (2000) also describes intercultural competence as a set of traits and dimensions and confirms it is a developmental process.

Fantini (2000) proposes that being interculturally competent is similar to being interpersonal, but with different variables in the mix of the relationship. For example, an interpersonal person is successful at maintaining relationships, communicating effectively and cooperating with others. When differences in language, culture and worldview are introduced into a relationship, it becomes more complicated. People have fewer commonalities and differences increase. Fantini (2000) states for this relationship to be successful, one requires intercultural abilities.

In a review of the literature, intercultural researchers appear to agree that intercultural competence is made up of three main components (Deardorff, 2006, 2008, 2009; Hofstede et al., 2010; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). These three components are awareness, knowledge and skills. Hofstede et al. (2010) describe, “the acquisition of intercultural communication abilities passes through three phases beginning with awareness, then knowledge, followed by skills” (p. 419). Developed from a Delphi study of the leading intercultural experts Deardorff (2004) defines intercultural competence as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes” (p. 184). This definition is important because it asserts communication as a part of being interculturally competent. Some researchers (Moeller & Nugent, 2014; Byram, 2009) will add that an important part of becoming interculturally competent is also being linguistically competent in more than one language. Fantini (2009) further adds to that in addition to awareness, knowledge

and skills; there is a fourth dimension of intercultural competence called positive attitudes.

Although these researchers have developed a definition for intercultural competence Dalib, Harun and Yusoff (2014) argue that these definitions and models have a Western bias. This is supported by Yep (2014) who challenges the Eurocentric conceptualization of intercultural competence arguing that intercultural competence has been conceptualized through an U.S. American, White, middle-class lens which all other cultures are measured and judged. Yep's (2014) argument is validation for the importance of this study. This study facilitates the other voices, specifically the voices of school stakeholders' regarding their views. Often these stakeholders, specifically in an international school come from a variety of cultures, ethnic backgrounds and nationalities. Confirming Yep's (2014) call, this study presents a non-Eurocentric reconceptualization of intercultural sensitivity through dialogue. It also presents a non-researcher or interculturalist understanding and definition for intercultural sensitivity

In addition to developing a basic definition for intercultural competence as described above, there are a variety of models that further frame understanding of the traits, dimensions and development of intercultural competence. Fantini (2000) describes these as the constructs of intercultural competence and a further review of models is relevant to presenting a complete understanding.

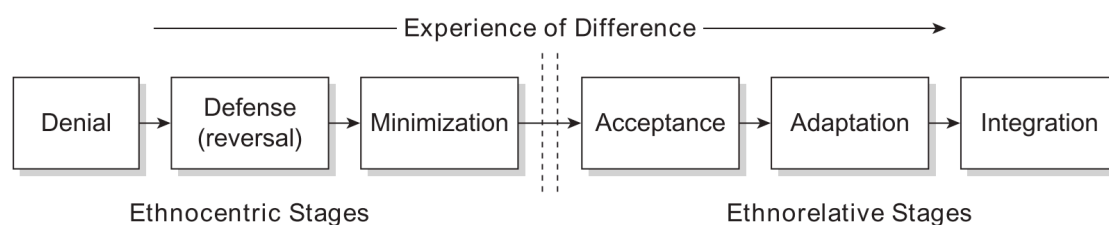
**Foundational models of intercultural competence.** Models to describe and conceptualize intercultural competence generally fall into five different categories and serve as a basis for helping to understand intercultural competence from different

viewpoints (Dusi, Messetti, Steinbach, 2014; Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009). For the purposes of this study and the developmental nature of competencies in school, a developmental model appears to be most applicable in relating to the goals of this study. Therefore, it is discussed first in this chapter. Similar to competency skills in academic subjects like math or writing that take time to develop, so does intercultural sensitivity which leads ultimately to competence.

**Developmental models.** Developmental models are relevant to this study because they describe intercultural competence as something that develops over time specifying different stages of intercultural competence development moving from ethnocentric to ethnorelative. Researchers confirm intercultural competence is a process that develops over time and one can also develop different degrees of intercultural competence (Bennett, 1986; Deardorff, 2006; Spitzberg and Chagnon, 2009). Therefore, when considering how this is developed in schools a developmental model can be a relevant model to frame this study. The model used to frame this study is Milton Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS).

**The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS).** Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) is a continuum that describes different dimensions of intercultural sensitivity. Researchers confirm that this developmental model is also a framework that can also be used for conceptualizing intercultural competence arguing "that greater intercultural sensitivity is associated with greater potential for exercising intercultural competence" (Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman, 2003, p. 422). Therefore, the Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003)

comparison of “intercultural sensitivity” to “intercultural competence” is a foundation of this study. They state the term “intercultural sensitivity” refers to the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences, while the term “intercultural competence” means the ability to think and act in intercultural appropriate ways (p. 422). This may imply that in order to become competent one must first become sensitive. Since the Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) conceptualization concludes that sensitivity comes before competence this research investigates what leads a student to become more interculturally sensitive. The Bennett (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DIMS) is depicted below in Figure 3.



*Figure 3.* The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DIMS).

The assumption of the DMIS model is that as one gains more experience with cultural differences, one’s sensitivity to cultural differences becomes more sophisticated (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). Bennett’s (1993) model describes six different dimensions or worldviews towards cultural difference. Each stage of the model represents a person’s way of experiencing difference, moving from a stage of denial of difference to the most sophisticated stage of integration of differences (Bennett, 1993). According to Bennett there are six stages of intercultural sensitivity that lie along a continuum beginning with three ethnocentric stages and progressing towards three more ethnorelative stages of intercultural sensitivity. Each stage of Bennett’s model describes a person’s worldview



or cognitive structure at that particular stage. For each worldview, there are a certain set of behaviors and attitudes associated with that specific stage of sensitivity.

The most ethnocentric or default condition of intercultural sensitivity according to the DMIS is the *denial* stage. In this stage, cultural difference is not experienced and the only real culture is assumed to be the one experienced. Cultural difference to people in this stage is of little interest and considered foreign. The second ethnocentric stage is *defense*. People in the defense stage are threatened by other cultures and organize the world into an “us” vs. “them” mentality. Their culture is thought to be superior to all other cultures. Lastly and the third ethnocentric stage of *minimization*, superficial cultural differences are acknowledged, but the underlying assumption is that culture is thought to be universal and cultures are essentially all the same in some way.

The second set of the three DMIS stages are considered more sophisticated and ethnorelative, where one’s culture is experienced in the context of other cultures. People with an ethnorelative worldview are what Ashwill and Oanh (2009) call “global citizens.” Global citizens think and feel as being part of something larger and are not limited to the constraints of their own culture. They have a larger worldview. Cultural differences in values, behaviors and beliefs are acknowledged. The first of these ethnorelative worldviews is the *acceptance* stage. At the acceptance stage people view their culture as one of many different cultures and are able to realize the difference between their culture and other cultures. In the acceptance stage other cultures may still be viewed negatively, but are still considered equal. Moving along the continuum is the next stage called *adaptation*. In the adaptation stage, people are able to “adapt” to other cultures and one’s

worldview is expanded to where a person may take on behaviors and perspectives of the other culture. People in this stage display empathy and possess the ability to shift frames of thinking in line with the other culture. This shift is both cognitive and behavioral. Overtime as a person is able to shift between frames it becomes more of a habit and the person is thought of to become more bi-cultural.

The final and most ethnorelative stage of the Bennett (1993) DMIS is *integration*. People that possess an integration worldview are able to move in and out of more than one worldview. Their idea of self is constructed from a combination of worldviews and not limited to only one. Bennett and Bennett (2004) describe people in this stage as losing their identity and are stuck between cultures. In the integration stage people are intentionally flexible in their movement in and out of different cultural contexts. The DMIS model assumes that as one moves along the continuum towards ethnorelativism and acquires a new level of intercultural sensitivity, seldom do people retreat backwards in their level of sensitivity.

**Intercultural development inventory.** Following the DMIS, Hammer and Bennett developed the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). Wiseman joined them later to test the IDI for reliability and validity. Having gone through a few revisions from its original version, the IDI is a way to measure a person's individual development of intercultural sensitivity along the continuum of the DMIS. The IDI is a measurement tool in the form of a 50-item questionnaire used by individuals and a wide variety of industries and organizations. Individuals can complete the questionnaire either on paper or online. Upon completion of the questionnaire an IDI Individual Profile Report is

generated along with an Individual Development Plan (IDP). The IDP provides specific guidance for individuals to further develop their intercultural competence. The IDI has been rigorously tested and possesses cross-cultural generalization internationally (Hammer, 2008, 2011; 2012).

Due to the lack of studies related to the validity of intercultural competence assessments, Matsumoto and Hwang (2013) tested the validity of the IDI examining both the construct and ecological validity of the IDI. Matsumoto and Hwang (2013) define construct validity as verification that the assessment measures the construct it is designed to measure. The ecological validity refers to that the assessment's criterion variables accurately measuring what they intend to measure. Reporting on the IDI, Matsumoto and Hwang (2013) describe some studies producing mixed results regarding the construct validity of the IDI and do not accurately support Bennett's six stage model of intercultural sensitivity. Perry and Southwell (2011) also argue that a weakness of the IDI is that it assumes that people develop intercultural sensitivity in a linear process. They add the IDI, does not break down the intercultural sensitivity down into smaller dimensions showing where a person may be interculturally sensitive and where they may not. Bennett (2009) claims similarly that because the IDI categorizes people into categories, it loses more specific information about the individual and is not able to describe differences between individuals in the same category (ACE Ventures LLC, 2016).

Nonetheless, a Paige et al. (2003) empirical evaluation of the IDI concludes the IDI is "a sound instrument," and a satisfactory way of measuring intercultural sensitivity as

defined by Bennett (1993) in his developmental model (p. 485). Furthermore, in a response to Matsumoto and Hwang's (2013) claim, an independent review completed by ACE Ventures LLC concluded that Matsumoto and Hwang's definition of validity was not consistent with current industry standards and therefore not a satisfactory statement (ACE Ventures LLC, 2016). Additionally, Hammer (2015) in a clarifying response to Matsumoto and Hwang's claim, argue that Matsumoto and Hwang's (2013) lack of reliance upon established criteria for evaluating measures, inappropriately grouping all ten instruments under one statement of indented purpose and oversight problems regarding ecological validity make their statement inaccurate. ACE Ventures LLC (2016) also concluded that since Bennett's (2009) claim was not supported with more information or data it was an unsubstituted claim. Therefore, the IDI is considered a sound instrument to measure a person's intercultural sensitivity.

**Compositional models.** Compositional models of intercultural competence are models that identify the traits, characteristics, and skills that constitute intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2000; Spitzberg & Chagon, 2009). These models are useful in defining the basic contents or dimensions of intercultural competence. However, they are theoretically weak in describing the relationship between these different components, development and levels of proficiency of intercultural competence. These models typically present intercultural competence as being composed of a specific set of attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviors (Howard-Hamilton, Richardson, and Shuford, 1998; Perry & Southwell, 2011; Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998).

These models describe an attitude component of intercultural competence that

describes a person's emotion and motivation towards differences. Janet Bennett (2008) refers to this as the *heartset* of intercultural competence. It's the affective dimension and includes characteristics like curiosity, initiative, risk-taking, suspension of judgment, cognitive flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, cultural humility and resourcefulness. A second component is having a certain level of cognitive knowledge. Bennett (2008) calls this the *mindset* and includes attributes like cultural general and specific knowledge, and cultural self-awareness. Lastly the third common component of intercultural competence compositional models describes the skills required to act or be interculturally competent. Bennett (2008) refers to this as the *skillset*. This is the behavior dimension of intercultural competence and includes "the ability to empathize, gather appropriate information, listen, perceive accurately, adapt, initiate and maintain relationships, resolve conflict and manage social interactions and anxiety" (p. 19).

The Howard-Hamilton, Richardson, and Shuford (1998) compositional model places an emphasis on the attitudes of valuing one's own group along with the equality of groups, multi-centrism, risk-taking and the positive role cross cultural interactions have on the quality of one's life. The model also places an emphasis on having the knowledge to understand cultural identities, group boundaries, history of oppression, and the influences of cultural differences on communication. Skills valued in the model are self-reflection, articulation of differences, being able to take on a different perspective, challenging discriminatory actions and ability to communicate cross culturally (Spitzberg & Chagon, 2009, p. 11). The Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) model emphasizes attitudes of mindful reflexivity, taking multiple perspectives, analytical empathy and

intentional creativity. In the knowledge category they underline the importance of understanding difference due to individualism and collectivism, power distance, negotiating self and other face work styles. Skills emphasized are listening, observation, trust building, dialog collaboration, and face management (Spitzberg & Chagon, 2009, p. 12).

The Deardorff (2006) pyramid compositional model of intercultural competence lists probable attitudes, knowledge, and skills that define intercultural competence. In developing this model Deardorff (2006) used a Delphi method. Twenty-three of the leading intercultural experts participated in the study resulting in a consensus on a definition of what experts consider the components of intercultural competence. The Deardorff's (2006) model defines intercultural competence as a combination of a certain set of attitudes, knowledge, and skills that lead to desired internal and external outcomes.

The Deardorff (2006) model aligns with what Hofstede et al. (2010) said about the acquisition of intercultural competence passing through three phases beginning with attitudes which serve as a foundation for the building of knowledge and skills. This model presents this idea as a pyramid with attitudes serving as the foundation and the subsequent constructs of knowledge and skills on top of attitudes. The attitudes that define intercultural competence are first respect for other cultures and cultural diversity. A second component is openness, withholding judgment and being open to learning about people from other cultures. A third component is being curious and having the ability to deal with ambiguity and uncertainty related to a different cultural situation.

The knowledge believed to make up intercultural competence is first cultural self-

awareness about one's own culture. This is followed by culture specific knowledge about other cultures and the culture in which one is interacting. One must have a deep understanding of how different worldviews affect a cultural relationship with someone from another culture. The Deardorff (2006) model also includes a linguistic component emphasizing the importance of language and how knowledge of culturally appropriate language is important to the intercultural interaction. Skills listed in the model that facilitate intercultural competence are having the ability to listen, observe, interpret, analyze, evaluate and relate to others (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

**Co-orientational models.** A third set of intercultural competence models are co-orientational models, which emphasize the importance of successful interaction needed between cultures to achieve intercultural understanding. These models examine the achievement of comprehension between two different cultural members. These models examine the achievement level of the understanding, overlapping perspectives, accuracy, directness and clarity of all elements of interaction between people coming from two different cultures (Spitzberg & Changon, 2009). They demonstrate that there has to be a co-orientation that takes place between the two cultural members.

**Causal Process models.** The fourth set of intercultural competence models are causal process models. These models represent intercultural competence as a linear cyclical process. (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 30). They are typically presented with a set of downstream variables and upstream variables. Downstream variables influence upstream variables and are presented where upstream variables can also loop back around and build upon and influence downstream variables. Through a continuous process over

time the variables strengthen and eventually lead to a building of intercultural competence. For example, in the Deardorff (2006) causal model skills such as being able to listen and evaluate are considered valuable skills for intercultural competence. These skills then allow a person to effectively and appropriately communicate in an intercultural situation. By being able to communicate in this type of situation one's intercultural attitudes increase. With a more positive attitude one is more apt to have increased intercultural skills. Through this continuous loop intercultural competence increases and therefore a person becomes more interculturally competent (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 33).

**Adaptational models.** A final set of models called adaptational models emphasize the process a person moves through in adapting to another culture. The process of adapting to another culture is considered an important part of being interculturally competent. The main idea with these types of models are that intercultural competence can be achieved through interactions with members of another culture by a “mutual alteration of actions, attitudes, and understandings” (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 10). Simply, intercultural competence can be achieved by adapting.

**Similar Studies.** Bennett (1993) states that there is no historical model to help guide us in developing intercultural sensitivity. Furthermore, studies regarding the development of student intercultural sensitivity in K - 12 schools are limited and supported by Perry and Southwell (2011) who call for more research to be done in schools. Reviewing previous studies is helpful, but does not provide an exact strategy.

One field where there have been numerous studies regarding the development of



intercultural sensitivity is in the U.S. college undergraduate study abroad field and are helpful to this study. Although undergraduate college students are older than those participating in this study and develop intercultural sensitivity in a different context, some connections can be made to help inform K – 12 education.

One of the most significant studies from the U.S. study abroad field referred to as the Georgetown Consortium Study is research conducted by Vande Berg, Connor-Linton and Paige (2009) of 1,300 undergraduate students enrolled in 61 study abroad programs. This study lends evidence to the importance and benefits of educators intentionally intervening to help in the development of student intercultural learning. In this study conducted between 2002 and 2008, Vande Berg et al. (2009) discovered that student intercultural learning happens best when intentionally designed. Intercultural sensitivity does not happen by only exposure to another culture. Vande Berg et al. (2009) also found that with the presence of a cultural mentor, in this case a faculty adviser, significantly contributes to student intercultural learning gains. This may lend important relevance to K - 12 education when one considers that the classroom teacher is the one person who spends the most time with students during the school day and would be the most natural cultural mentor for K - 12 students.

Attempting to understand the impact of study abroad programs in a mixed methods retrospective tracer study Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josic, and Jon (2009) surveyed 6,391 former undergraduate study abroad students in the United States from 22 different universities. The study reveals that participation in a study abroad program led to increased global engagement specifically related to civic engagement, knowledge

production, philanthropy, social entrepreneurship, and voluntary simplicity. Former participants actively voted in elections, practiced voluntary simplicity, had something formally published, frequently volunteered and donated monetarily to educational organizations. Through action they also participated in influencing the social good of their communities. These findings are significant because they reveal the type of impacts that also appear to be in line with the missions of many international schools promoting intercultural sensitivity.

A Dalib, Harun, and Yusoff (2014) study reveals what students believe about intercultural competence. Investigating intercultural competence from the perspective of students at public Malaysian university Dalib et al. (2014) found two important elements regarding the development of student intercultural competence. The first was the importance of time. Cultural understanding does not happen in the first encounter with a person from another culture. It takes times for people to understand and learn from each other about how different cultures function. This time and repeated exposure allows the student to learn why people act in certain ways.

A second finding of the Dalib et al. (2014) study is that students believe that the presence of people from other cultures is essential in helping understand how their own culture influences their communication behaviors. Study participants share that intercultural learning is a mutual process where both participants learn from each other. Without this mutuality in the learning setting, intercultural learning is limited. The Dalib et al. (2014) findings help guide this study's use of constructivist learning theory because it suggests that obtaining intercultural sensitivity is a relational process and not only an

individual process. There are individual factors that contribute to the development of intercultural sensitivity as well as external factors related to the locale of where one is immersed. There must be partners for communication and a basis of cultural difference from which to compare to their one. The Dalib et al (2014) findings may lend evidence to the importance of diversity in the student body of the K - 12 educational setting to develop student intercultural sensitivity.

In a qualitative study of seventeen participants at an international school in south-east Asia, Dray (2005) interviewed students about their perceptions of being intercultural. Dray's (2005) study focused on the intercultural competencies students used and their social integration process at a school with internationally mobile families and students. The Dray (2005) study has relevant connections to this study's examination of leadership and school transformation literature. The Dray (2005) concludes that school management can make operational decisions in both the formal and hidden curriculum to create intercultural experiences which lead to the facilitation of intercultural competence and an improved social integration process for students.

A Fennes and Hapgood (1997) study suggests seven strategies for facilitating intercultural learning that could be used at an international school.

1. An emphasis on developing working relationships and communication between individual and groups that are culturally different.
2. Planning multiple opportunities for social learning between individuals and groups.
3. Plan opportunities that foster and develop and intercultural perspective.

4. Create a positive view of change.
5. Expose students to cultural and political education.
6. Support the ongoing process of transition and inclusion
7. Overcome ethnocentrism and move toward ethorelatism.

Narrowing the focus to K - 12 international schools there are a few studies that examine student intercultural sensitivity. In a study of 336, ninth - 12th grade students from over 40 different countries at a large Southeast Asian international school, Traffon (2003) uses the IDI to measure student intercultural sensitivity. A mixed methods study with structured interviews Traffon (2003) found 97% of the students were in Bennett's *acceptance* or *adaptation* stages of the DMIS. Also Traffon (2003) found that students level of intercultural sensitivity was positively correlated with the length of time students attended the international school. This finding is similar to the Vande Berg, Connor-Linton and Paige (2009) study that confirmed what Engle and Engle (2003) found earlier related to the significance of program duration in learning abroad and its positive correlation to increased intercultural learning.

In his dissertation, which is a mixed methods study, Hornbuckle (2013) studied teacher views regarding the ways in which student intercultural competence is developed at an international school in Southeast Asia. Hornbuckle (2012) examined the views of 46 high school teachers. His findings revealed that teachers believe there are four ways international school students gain intercultural competence. Students develop intercultural competence through, 1) spending time with students from other nationalities, 2) how the curriculum is taught in the classroom, 3) being in a school environment

supportive of intercultural competence and 4) being proficient in the English language.

Similar to the Hornbuckle (2013) study regarding student intercultural competence, Gerhard Muller (2012) explored the characteristics of international schools that promote international mindedness. Muller's (2012) defined international mindedness as, "a world-view in which people see themselves connected to the world community and display a sense of responsibility toward its members. This commitment is reflected through attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors." Limited by a small sample size of only five school heads from five different international schools Muller's (2012) qualitative study found that leaders must be committed to promoting international mindedness and the school's core values, curriculum, and programs must be aligned with the promotion of international mindedness. Muller (2012) also found that school leaders believed the study of other languages, student leadership and community service opportunities were essential for the facilitation of student international mindedness.

### **Leadership for School Transformation**

As is the case with any student learning goal, academic or non-academic, for intercultural sensitivity to flourish in the hearts and minds of young people, a professional school culture and strong curriculum framework guided by strong and competent leadership is considered important. Individually school leaders have the power to shape the assumptions, beliefs, expectations and focus of a school. Evidence suggests that the principal, director or head of school is the central person responsible for facilitating a school's mission, curriculum, student achievement and the development of school culture (Deal & Peterson, 2009).

Furthermore, considering the constant growth of international schools one could argue that international schools are becoming more business-like in their approach and little different than any other global business caught up in the wave of globalization, catering to the corporate transnational elite and reinforcing the inequalities in education (MacDonald, 2006; Sklair, 2005; Spring, 2014). Therefore, if the prescribed mission of an international school is to deliver a quality international education that promotes intercultural sensitivity, some schools may be at risk of having their mission distorted by stakeholders who don't fully understand their prescribed mission and presents some critical issues for the international school leader. The challenge for international school leaders is to hold true to a school's intercultural mission within this high pressure globalized environment and realize the greater goal is to develop interculturally sensitive students.

Lee, Hallinger, and Walker (2012) explaining parental interpretation and expectations of international school programs in East Asia, emphasizes that leaders should understand that parent expectations are rooted in a social culture that places a strong value on education and academic learning referred to as, *education fever*. Recognizing this, Lee, Hallinger and Walker (2012) further recommend school leaders be proactive in developing parent understanding of the goals and mission of the international school, and devote significant resources towards educating parents about the rationale and processes of an international education.

### **Curriculum framework for development of intercultural sensitivity.**

Confirmed by Bennett (1998) and present throughout the intercultural learning literature,

an educational leader who is responsible for facilitating intercultural learning which leads to student intercultural sensitivity should rely on a framework and intentionally plan interventions for learning to be effective (Vande Berg, 2009). Modern century curriculum researchers discuss once such idea of how schools can be organized to facilitate learning goals through a framework called *backward design* (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; McTighe & Curtis, 2016; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Although originally promoted as a framework for facilitating academic learning goals, this same framework is being applied to trans-disciplinary learning goals such as student intercultural sensitivity. Researchers claim the *backward design* process helps facilitate learner impacts that originate from school missions (Wiggins & McTighe, 2012). A closer review of this design is relevant for helping to understand the effective facilitation of student intercultural sensitivity in schools.

This blueprint is organized around a three-step process called *impact-output-input*, where the impact of learning is determined first and the curriculum, structures, programs and resources are planned backward from the impact goal. McTighe and Curtis (2016) elaborate on this framework using the terminology of transfer of learning or *impacts* to describe learning goals. Clarifying this terminology, an *impact* is the end goal of student learning and is the ability for a student to apply their learning in various situations and contexts that are different from where it was learned (McTighe & Curtis, 2016). McTighe and Curtis (2016) argue that in today's world it is no longer acceptable for students to only repeat back information learned. Modern century learners must be able to transfer what has been learned to a variety of situations and contexts, with most of this

being outside of school. Student intercultural sensitivity is one such example of an *impact* and could fall into this category.

Wiggins and McTighe (2005) and McTighe and Curtis (2016) recommend that after identifying the desired specific student impact leaders design backward to the second step of the process, called an *output*. Outputs are structures, programs, activities or planned curriculum this is clarified in the form of student performance. For example, a school musical, Model United Nations (MUN) team, service learning project or after-school activities program are examples of different outputs that one could possibly find in a school. Lastly in the third stage of the McTighe and Curtis *impact-output-input* framework, leaders are encouraged to plan the specific actions or *inputs* to reach the learning impact goal. Inputs are the resources needed to effectively carry out the output. Inputs could be thought of as resources and are the things needed to allow the outputs to happen. Examples of inputs could be resources like teachers, facilities, books, and financing.

**Transformational leadership.** Discussions around improving programs, curriculum and culture in schools often point to the importance of leadership. Leaders of international schools today are leading and transforming very multi-cultural organizations with a wide range of community beliefs about the educational commodity they are offering. Education is in the midst of moving from an old paradigm to a new paradigm for educating students. Within this environment, leadership must be dynamic in guaranteeing implementation of an intercultural school mission. Therefore, if a school is to focus on the intentional development of student intercultural sensitivity and for it to



take real hold in the culture and programs of the school, a review of the literature related to leadership for school transformation is relevant to this study.

Riesbeck's (2008) identifies four valuable leadership characteristics for principals in schools with an intercultural mission. Riesbeck (2008) recommends leaders model professional behavior, promote intercultural programs to the public, display enthusiasm or passion about their school's intercultural mission and utilize strong public relations skills.

It wasn't until recently when researchers began to identify more specifically the skills leaders need to effectively transform schools (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Walhlstrom, 2004; Louis, 2006; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Deal and Peterson (2009) present a framework for school leaders to transform culture which focuses on reading cultural clues, reviewing existing patterns and then either reinforcing or transforming these patterns. Cohen (2005) says that for transformation to be successful it cannot be dependent upon one person alone. Everyone involved in an organization needs to believe that transformation is necessary before they feel motivated to commit to the change (Marzano, Hefflebower, Hoegh, Warrick, & Grift, 2016).

Sustained cultural change requires the work of all people in the organization and the development of leaders at every level, which is a hallmark of transformational leadership (Marzano, Hefflebower, Hoegh, Warrick, & Grift, 2016). Transformational leaders respond to the individual needs of followers, empower followers and pay close attention to their professional and personal development (Hickman, 2016; Northouse 2013). They have the ability to align the objectives and goals of the followers, the leader,

and organization (Hickman, 2016, p. 76). Transformational leaders are able to get followers to commit to the vision of the organization, and be creative problem solvers and are described as having charisma. Because transformational leadership is charismatic, followers identify with the leader and in turn this inspires followers. As the name indicates transformational leadership transforms people and organizations.

One of the criticisms of transformational leadership is that it can be perceived, “as elitist and antidemocratic” (Hickman, 2016, p. 81). However, one of the clear advantages of transformational leadership in a diverse international setting is its acceptance in all parts of the world and types of organizations. Den Hartog, House, Hanges, Ruiz-Quintanilla, & Dorfman (1999) and Dorfman, Hanges, & Brodbeck (2004) argue, “that elements of charismatic-transformational leadership are leader qualities valued in a majority of countries and cultures” (as cited in Hickman, 2016, p. 85). This is true because a transformational leadership style is consistent with most people’s belief of the model leader (Bass, 1997).

Transformational leadership is a multifaceted approach which has four components that can be measured by the Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1997; Bass, 1985; Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995). The first component is called *Idealized Influence (II)* and refers to the influence leaders have on followers due to the way followers perceive the leader. Leaders with a high idealized influence are often perceived to have a high moral character, are admired, trusted and idealized in the eyes of followers. The second component is called *Inspirational Motivation (IM)* and refers to the leader’s behavior and ability to articulate a clear mission and vision for the future.

The third component is *Intellectual Stimulation (IS)* and challenges followers to think differently, creatively, and innovatively about problems. Using this component, leader can guide followers to re-frame situations and look at situations from different points of view. The fourth and final component of transformational leadership is called *Individual Consideration (IC)* and describes the leader's ability to coach and develop followers. A transformational leader finds ways to create a supportive climate allowing for new learning opportunities to take place easily.

### **Conclusion**

It is inevitable that schools with an intercultural mission will continue to grow over the next decade. With this substantial growth in the number and style of schools around the world, Drake (2011) states the attempt to define the concept of an international school is becoming more challenging, suggesting that there are two types of international schools, one that is international in name only and one that purposefully promotes student intercultural sensitivity.

Researchers agree that one essential aspect of a successful international education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the development of intercultural sensitivity in its students (Harwood & Bailey, 2012; Hill, 2012; Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, 2015). Further discussed by Hayden and Thompson (2000), the structure and overall ethos of a school are important in helping to facilitate this development of international sensitivity.

To understand how intercultural sensitivity is developed and learned within the environs of a school, this study is guided and purposefully framed around these three different bodies of literature. Bennett (2013) tells us that intercultural sensitivity is

something that can be learned and taught. Therefore, constructivist learning theory serves as the important lens in which to further understand the development of intercultural sensitivity. Constructivist learning appears to give further relevance to this study because it considers the individual and social factors that influence learning. Secondly, since terminology can be confusing, helping to clarify more clearly what exactly is being developed in a school, the review of intercultural communication theory is valuable. Linking this to action and leadership, a review of the literature related to leadership for school transformation is necessary.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology and Methods**

#### **Introduction**

The development of student intercultural sensitivity is a prevailing theme, implied throughout many international school mission and belief statements. However, identifying what actually influences its development within the milieu of an international school is uncertain. Scholars and researchers have written extensively on the development of intercultural sensitivity, but little research has been conducted specifically examining the views of teachers, parents and students.

Evidenced by the growth of international schools around the world, parents clearly value an education for their children that fosters the development of the intercultural skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for student participation in an inclusive global society. Teachers, parents, and students are stakeholders in a school community, whose views are relevant and helpful for guiding the practice of school leaders aspiring to strategically lead intercultural sensitivity initiatives in their schools (Hickman, 2016, Deal & Peterson, 2009). In regard to the development of student intercultural sensitivity, this study has the potential to help guide school leaders in effective practice for the development of student intercultural sensitivity.

#### **Statement of Study Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to examine high school teacher, parent and student views of the factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China. This study addresses the following four research questions.

1. How do teachers, parents and students at an international school in China define student intercultural sensitivity?

2. What are the similarities and differences among teacher, parent and student views of the ways student intercultural sensitivity is developed at an international school in China?

3. What are teacher, parent and student views regarding individual factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China?

4. What are teacher, parent and student views regarding institutional factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China?

## **Methodology**

Seeking to understand how the social phenomenon of student intercultural sensitivity develops within an international school in China, from the point of view of teachers, parents, and students, this study is a qualitative study, guided by a constructivist “worldview” (Creswell, 2014, p. 6).

Therefore, rather than using a quantitative approach, which examines the relationship among variables and attempts to explain a statistical relationship between variables, this study uses a qualitative approach to capture participants’ views about the process that leads to the development of student intercultural sensitivity from within the confines of a school (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). Arguing for the value and strengths of choosing qualitative research as opposed to quantitative research, Maxwell

(2013) describes this as “process theory” (p. 29). Process theory, in which qualitative research is based, “sees the world in terms of people, situations, events and the processes that connect these; explanation is based on an analysis of how some situations and events influence others” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 29). This study attempts to understand the meaning of student intercultural sensitivity from the views of school stakeholders, within the context in which the stakeholders act. In this study, it is within the context of an international school, which evidenced by its own assertions in foundational documents like mission and belief statements, appears to value and foster the development of intercultural sensitivity for its students. This study has the potential to identify influences that generate new and casual explanations about the factors influencing development of student intercultural sensitivity (Maxwell, 2013, p. 30-31).

Creswell (2014), reinforced by Maxwell (2013), supports a qualitative approach when exploring a topic with a group whose views on the subject have not been studied. Maxwell (2013) argues that qualitative research has a further advantage when it generates ideas that can be appreciated by the people being studied and is intended to improve existing practice through collaboration with the participants. This qualitative approach allows the researcher to personally engage within the context of the school, ask open-ended questions of school stakeholders, and through an inductive approach discover concrete ideas about what actually influences the development of student intercultural sensitivity from multiple perspectives of the stakeholders (Creswell, 2014, p. 20).

## Methods

By relying as much as possible on a variety of different school stakeholder perspectives, this study uses a series of focus group interviews with three different school stakeholder groups (teachers, parents and students), as well as individual follow up interviews with representative focus group participants. Data from this study is used to help understand what practices, programs or policies in the school influence the development of student intercultural sensitivity (Crotty, 1998; Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013).

Kruger and Casey (2015) write, “a focus group isn’t just getting a bunch of people together to talk. A focus group is a special kind of group in terms of purpose, size, composition and procedures” (p. 2). Focus groups are used to gather opinions to better understand how participants feel about an issue and can offer valuable insights into the opinions of stakeholders that help guide future organizational planning, goals and improvement (Kruger & Casey, 2015). Creswell (2014) adds that interviews are useful when participants cannot be directly observed and can provide historical information. In this study, student intercultural sensitivity is not directly observed, but teachers, parents and students are interviewed to express their views on the research questions related to the development of student intercultural sensitivity.

However, there are some criticisms of focus groups interviews ranging from how dominant individuals can influence the results, to producing inconsequential results. Creswell (2014) also adds that limitations to this type of method is that interviews



provide information filtered through the lens of those interviewed and the researcher presence may bias the responses given by those being interviewed.

By examining the views of school stakeholders through focus group interviews and individual follow-up interviews, this study has the potential to guide school leaders in improving strategies or discovering new ones that have a direct influence on the development of student intercultural sensitivity in schools, and more specifically China Intercultural School.

### **Sampling Strategies**

To best understand the development of student intercultural sensitivity, stakeholder participants were carefully and purposefully selected using stratified random sampling. As Kruger and Casey (2015) state, homogeneity of a group is important when designing focus groups. The participants in this study represented three different school stakeholder groups. They are high school teachers, high school parents and high school students over the age of 18 years old. Also, confirmed by Kruger and Casey (2015), purpose drives the research study. The purpose of this study is to inform leadership and guide future practice, based on stakeholder views, not to only reinforce their already held administrator beliefs (p. 64). Therefore, the views of school administrators are not considered in this study. The study attempts to discover viewpoints from deep within the organization. While the views of elementary and middle school teachers, parents, and students are of value, for the purposes of this study, elementary students and subsequently the views of their teachers and parents are not examined.

Data were collected from a total of three different stakeholders (teachers, parents and students) through the use of focus group interviews, and individual follow up interviews. First, a total of seven different focus group interviews were held. Two separate focus group interviews were held with the high school teacher group, two for the parent group and three for the high school student stakeholder group. As indicated by Kruger and Casey (2015), a sufficient number of interviews is necessary to truly capture the opinions of the larger group and increase validity.

Following the focus group interviews, four individual follow-up interviews were held. There was an individual follow-up interview held with one teacher, one parent and two students. Individual interview participants were drawn from those who had already participated in the focus group interview and volunteered to provide further commentary around the outcomes of themes that developed out of the prior focus group interviews. The purpose of the individual follow up interviews was to investigate deeper into stakeholder views regarding intercultural sensitivity and to provide further clarity and confirmation of the information expressed in the larger focus group interview. Questions used for the individual follow-up interviews were developed from, and related to statements expressed in the larger focus group interview. All focus group interviews and individual follow-up interviews were held in a conference room on the school's campus using a specified established focus group interview protocol.

### **Data Collection Strategies**

All focus group participants were identified through the school's enrollment software *PowerSchool*, who met the criteria of having been affiliated with the school for

at least two years. This allowed the opportunity to collect views from stakeholders who had a deeper level of understanding and experience with the school culture. It is assumed that this experience factor increased the quality of views expressed by participants.

Data collection took place over the course of two months using seven separate focus group interviews no longer than 90 minutes with represented school stakeholder groups. Each of the focus group interviews contained five to six identified participants representing each of the different stakeholder groups. In this qualitative research, sampling of participants is as Maxwell (2013) describes as, “purposeful sampling” or “purposeful selection” (p. 97). Participants were deliberately selected to provide information about the research questions related to development of student intercultural sensitivity.

**Selection of teacher participants.** Teacher stakeholder focus group participants were identified in a similar way to how students are selected. Using the *PowerSchool* database names of all teachers working in the high school were generated. Any teachers working at the school for less than two full years were eliminated and their names were made ineligible for selection. Each remaining teacher was assigned a number in ascending order. Using the random number generating site, [www.random.org](http://www.random.org), 16 teachers are identified. All 16 teachers were invited to participate, 12 volunteered and 11 ultimately participated, allowing for two focus groups composed of six and five teachers, respectively.

**Selection of parent participants.** Parent participants were selected through convenience sampling. Maxwell (2013), citing Weiss (1994) says that occasionally in

qualitative research, it is necessary to select participants in such a way when it is difficult to gain access to a certain category of people (p. 97). Due to a significant number of the school's parents who do not speak English, randomly selecting from the whole school, would have led to selecting parents who do not have the language skills to effectively participate in a focus group interview completed in English. Therefore, the parent focus group participants were drawn from those parents who already have the proven English language skills and are comfortable to volunteer with the school's Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA). Participants for the parent stakeholder focus group interviews were drawn from the grade level coordinators of the high school PTSA, of which there are 16 parents. All 16 parents were invited to participate, 12 volunteered, and 11 ultimately participated, allowing for two focus groups made up of six and five parents respectively.

**Selection of student participants.** To identify student participants for the three focus group interviews, one list of all high school Grade 11– 12 students over the age of 18 years old was obtained from the school's *PowerSchool* enrollment database. Student names were placed in alphabetical order by last name. All students attending the school for less than two full years were eliminated and made ineligible for selection. Each remaining student on the separate list was assigned a number in ascending order. Using the random number generating site, [www.random.org](http://www.random.org), 24 students from the list were identified and all 24 students were invited to participate. Eighteen students accepted the invitation to participate and 16 actually participated allowing for three focus groups of six, five and five students each.

## Data Analysis Strategies

As each stakeholder focus group interview was completed, it was sent away for transcription. Creswell (2014) confirms that in qualitative research, analysis of data can begin simultaneously, unlike in quantitative research, where the researcher must wait until the end to analyze data (p. 195). At the completion of each stakeholder focus group, and audio recording file was sent to *www.rev.com* for transcription. Control for credibility and understanding strict procedures for the collection of stakeholder views was applied.

Once the transcription was returned, an analysis of the qualitative data was completed by coding and aggregating the data into a small number of themes. The *constant comparison method* described by Kruger and Casey (2015) was applied (p. 147). Beginning with the first focus interview question and continuing with each subsequent question, each response to the question was analyzed. If the response answered the question it was assigned a title or code. The next response was analyzed, if it was a similar answer, it was assigned the same title or code. If it did not, then it was given a different title or code that described the response more accurately. This was completed separately for each of the teachers, parents and student groups. Themes were developed by identifying themes specific to each teacher, parent and student group and by also converging the themes from these three different groups. (Kruger & Casey, 2015; Creswell, 2014).

The criteria employed to develop these themes went beyond only frequency and depth. The coding process employed Kruger and Casey's (2015) criteria for prioritizing

themes from focus group interviews. First, the coding process considered frequency and extensiveness. In other words, the coding process considered how often and many different people mentioned the idea. It also considered the intensity or passion of the comment expressed by participants. The specificity of the comment and how detailed the information provided was to the research question was considered. Participant perception of the importance of the comment, along with new or different nuances to what participants expressed was a helpful consideration in developing themes. The study also employed member checking by utilizing individual face-to-face follow up interviews after each focus group interview. This allowed for participants to comment on the findings and further provide validity to potential themes. Although this research did not employ an external auditor, there was careful documentation of procedures by designating a folder for each of the seven focus group interviews and four individual interviews.

## **Conclusion**

Employing a qualitative design, this study used a combination of focus group interviews and individual follow-up interviews with high school teachers, parents and students to discover themes related the development of student intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China. A total of 38 different teachers, parents and students participated in the study, through a series of seven focus group interviews and four individual follow-up interviews. Specifically, 11 teachers, 11 parents, and 16 students were interviewed. There were two different focus groups for teachers, two for parents and three with students. This qualitative design and methods was employed because the

researcher assumed that teachers, parents and students may have distinct views about the development of student intercultural sensitivity. Therefore, because of their unique characteristics, focus groups and individual follow up interviews, allowed for the collection of these views by group and for analysis of similarities and differences among the teachers, parents and students.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Findings**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine high school teacher, parent and student views of the factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China. To explore this, a total of seven structured focus group interviews and four individual follow-up interviews were held with school stakeholders at China Intercultural School in Shanghai, China. This chapter discusses the main findings from these interviews and is organized around the four research questions listed below.

1. How do teachers, parents and students at an international school in China define student intercultural sensitivity?

2. What are the similarities and differences among teacher, parent and student views of the ways student intercultural sensitivity is developed at an international school in China?

3. What are teacher, parent and student views regarding individual factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China?

4. What are teacher, parent and student views regarding institutional factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China?

After conducting a series of focus group interviews, followed by individual follow-up interviews, qualitative data from these interviews were coded using the



software *Quirkos*. From the coding process, themes emerged related to the research questions and are described in this chapter.

### **Focus Group Demographics**

Teachers, parents, and students at China Intercultural School describe themselves as coming from a variety of different countries and cultures. This also complements China Intercultural School's enrollment data. At China Intercultural School for the 2018-19 school year, the USA, Canada, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan held the top five spots of total enrolled students. Diversity by the number of different nationalities enrolled in the school has remained constant over the years, with the total student body being made up of 45 nationalities in 2018-19 (China Intercultural School, 2017). Therefore, to capture this diversity of the focus group participants, at the beginning of each focus group interview, participants were asked to share the country they considered to be their "home country." Participants were also asked to share what other countries they lived in prior to coming to reside in China. Participants' answers to these two interview questions are described in more detail below, and are also reflected in Table 1.

**Teachers.** Due to China work visa requirements, teachers who deliver the curriculum in English at China Intercultural School must be trained and hold a passport from those countries considered to be English speaking countries by the Chinese government. These countries include the USA, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Ireland (China Intercultural School, 2017). Therefore, a majority of the teachers, and subsequently, the teacher focus group participants at China Intercultural School came from these countries. It is interesting to note, that unlike the

parent and student participants, when asked what country they considered themselves to be from, the teacher participants could clearly answer this question categorically. For example, one focus group teacher participant said, “I consider myself to be Australian.” Another participant said, “I definitely have a KIWI (New Zealand) background” and another said, “I am from Oregon and Hawaii.”

Teacher participants were all high school teachers who had taught at the school for more than one year and who had come to the school with a variety of teaching experiences. Prior to teaching at China Intercultural School, teachers had experience in a range of types of schools, including both public and private schools. All teachers had previously taught in countries whose primary language was English, including New Zealand, Australia, England, Canada and the USA. Teachers’ prior experience included teaching at international schools in Germany, Taiwan, Bahrain, UAE, France, Morocco, Japan, Mongolia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Greece, and Vietnam. Teachers also taught a broad range of subjects, including, English, Chemistry, Mathematics, Economics, Learning Support, Band, and Counseling. Like other stakeholder participants, all teachers had been affiliated with the school for more than one complete school year.

**Parents.** Although a majority of parent stakeholder participants could be described as ethnically Chinese, all participants were able to describe experiences living outside of China, mostly for either university attendance, employment, or both. Parent participants had lived in a range of countries outside of China, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Netherlands, Japan, Nigeria, Australia, Canada and

USA. One focus group participant, described her experience in this way. “I have lived in Canada after I studied there. My kids, before we came to Shanghai, well we're from Hong Kong originally. So the kids were born in Hong Kong. Then they went to Malaysia, Singapore and then now we're here.” Parents described similar paths to arriving in Shanghai, only the amount of time and locations where they lived varied. In their reflections, parents were able draw from a range of experience in other international schools, as well as their experience at China Intercultural School. All parents had enrolled their children in another international school either in China, or another country prior to attending China Intercultural School.

**Students.** Similar to the parent participants, the student participants were a cross-section of students representing a variety of countries with a broad range of international experiences. Being that students were over the age of 18 years old, they were all in the current grade 12 class. All students had previously attended another international schools, either in Shanghai or outside of China. Some students had attended public and private school in the USA. Besides China, students had lived in Singapore, New Zealand, Brazil, Korea, Japan, Netherlands, France, and the USA. Only two students had lived in Shanghai for their entire life. Therefore, describing what they considered to be their home country was not so clear and revealed some insights into the transitory nature of the students’ upbringing over the last 18 years. Students described examples of being born in the USA, as part of a culturally Chinese family, living in the USA for some years and then moving to China. Others described being American, but having been born in France and living in a variety of other countries before China. For the majority of student

participants, describing what they considered their “home country” can be illustrated by one focus group student participant who said, “Technically I'm a United States citizen, but I'm really in this weird vacuum, where I hold a US passport, but I'm also living inside kind of a mixed culture household. I did not really consider myself Chinese until high school, when I transferred over here. I'm not really sure what I should consider myself.” Another participant, who holds an American passport, explained, “I would consider myself to be like Chinese-American. I guess more Chinese, because I've lived in China more than my other American peers. But, I've never fully integrated with local culture, even though I've lived here for 15 years. So, I consider myself to be from both China and America.”

Students who attend China Intercultural School must carry a passport other than a Chinese passport. This is because the school is considered by the Chinese government to be a *School for Children of Foreign Workers (SCFW)*. A SCFW in China may only enroll children of foreign personnel. They are not for profit schools and offer a foreign international curriculum, not obligated to offer the local curriculum (Brummitt, 2016). At the beginning of each focus group interview, participants were asked to identify the country they considered to be their “home country” and Table 1 reflects participants answers to this question. Participants answers do not necessarily represent participants’ passport country. The number in parentheses represents the number of participants, who answered the question in this way.

Table 1			
<i>Focus Group Participants Identified Home Country</i>			
<u>Group</u>	<u>Focus Group 1</u>	<u>Focus Group 2</u>	<u>Focus Group 3</u>
Teachers	USA (3) New Zealand (1) Australia (1)	USA (2) New Zealand (2) China (1) Canadian (1)	
Parents	China (2) Hong Kong (2) Indonesia (1) USA (1)	Singapore (1) USA/China (2) Australia (1) USA (1)	
Students	New Zealand (1) USA (1) Singapore (1) USA/China (1) Korea (1)	USA/China (2) USA (2) Korea (1) New Zealand (1)	China (1) Taiwan (1) USA/China (1) USA/Netherlands (1) Japan (1)

**Research Question One.** *How do teachers, parents and students at an international school in China define student intercultural sensitivity?*

For the purposes of this research, this study uses a combination of the Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) and the Chen (1997) definition of intercultural sensitivity. Intercultural sensitivity is, “the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural difference” (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003). It is also an individual’s ability to, "develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promote an appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication” (Chen, 1997). Research question one is an attempt to understand how high school teachers, parents and students define intercultural sensitivity, allowing for comparison of similarities and differences to each other and how it is defined by intercultural researchers. Through both focus group interviews and individual follow up interviews,

teacher, student, and parent groups, define intercultural sensitivity in similar ways, but with subtle distinctions. These findings are described in more detail below and reflected in Table 2.

**Teachers.** Based on focus group and individual follow-up interview results, teachers indicate that intercultural sensitivity is firstly defined by recognizing there is a difference between cultures. Then secondly, teachers describe having an openness to the cultural difference. Teachers discuss a third aspect, which is a curiosity to want to understand the difference between cultures.

As one teacher described in the focus group interview, “I guess my definition of it (intercultural sensitivity) is being able to see differences, but having your own culture, and being appreciative of it (another culture), is how I see it.” Another teacher said, “it’s about understanding there is a difference, and accepting.” Another added, it is about a “curiosity” to the difference, also affirmed by a second focus group participant. In an individual follow up interview, describing the importance of exercising intercultural sensitivity in her counseling role, one teacher further stated, “I just feel that it is our responsibility in international schools to understand the cultures of the families that we work with. Because once we understand, it helps us many times to bridge understanding.” Also, attempting to describe this in practice, one teacher in the focus group explained how it is an asset for her to understand Chinese culture and expectation around school. “I can say (to parents), I understand that in your understanding of education, this is how it works. If I don't have that, then we're never going to communicate, and it happens even in the college counseling level.”

In the focus group interview, one teacher described a possible definition for intercultural sensitivity stating that intercultural sensitivity is, “recognizing, that there is a difference, then asking oneself how might I be open to approach this situation. It might be strange to me, but you do your thing and I'll do mine. Because of that acceptance, we will be in a richer place for understanding each other.”

**Parents.** When defining intercultural sensitivity, parents views indicate there are four major aspects of intercultural sensitivity. Similar to teachers and students, parents also define intercultural sensitivity as first, recognizing that there is a difference. Second, after recognizing there is a difference, being open-minded to the difference, which is also similar to what teachers and students said. For example, one parent’s view supported what a majority of other parents described in the focus group. The parent said, “I think to develop that sensitivity is a very conscious effort. You need to recognize the existence (of difference) and you need to make an effort.” Described similarly, another parent affirmed, “I will say to recognize the existence of it. It's a starting point. You have to understand that it is something that exists and be open to it.”

After open-mindedness, this is followed by a third aspect, which is being respectful of differences in cultures. A majority of parents in the focus group interview confirmed this idea of respect. One parent described their child while defining intercultural sensitivity saying, “They're very sensitive, they're very aware of what's happening. The main thing is to respect each other’s, different culture, different dynamic, different nationality.” Another parent in the focus group affirmed a common human connection all cultures and people have to each other. The parent said, “I think what I

see in my kids is that for them it's not so much about different culture; it's about the individual. They have learned to respect other people's culture, because everybody is from a very different background and has had a very unique experience.” This was not an aspect suggested by the teachers or the students. Parents described their children’s strong desire to learn more about differences and appear to embrace diversity and avoid judgement of the differences they experience or see in people. Parents stated that children see differences as normal and an individual choice.

A fourth aspect is having the ability to embrace these differences. While teachers talked more about having a curiosity and understanding of the difference, parent views suggest an embracing of the difference. A parent described embracing cultural differences this way when describing her child, who the parent felt displayed intercultural sensitivity. The parent said, “This feels normal to them because they have experienced so many other cultures. They're like, wow, this is cool! What can we embrace here? What can we learn here? Who are these people? How are we going to fit in ourselves?”

**Students.** When defining intercultural sensitivity, matching teachers and parents, students define intercultural sensitivity as first recognizing that there are differences in cultures. Students add that this difference is not something to be surprised about or believe that it is novel or “weird.” Cultural differences are natural and normal, say students. “It’s just the way the world is,” said one student. Students describe an interculturally sensitive person as someone who is not surprised at these differences, but rather approaches intercultural situations as “no big deal.” In the context of China Intercultural School, and in an individual follow up interview, a student described it this



way, highlighting the natural flow of cultures present in the school. The student said, “It is not weird at all because we're interacting with cultures on a day to day basis, and you come to realize that there are differences in the way that different cultures act.”

In addition to recognizing the differences as being normal, students described the natural ability of students to be open-minded to other cultures. Naming an example to further support this idea, a student in an individual follow-up interview described a simple casual conversation between a Korean student and himself. The students were discussing college choices in class one day. Reflecting on the conversation, the student said he really began to understand more about Korean culture and the differences between the USA and Korea, even including government policy.

After recognizing there is a difference and being open-minded, students clarified another aspect of defining intercultural sensitivity is having empathy and embracing these differences in cultures. In providing an example of their definition of intercultural sensitivity, a student in the focus group used an example describing how students at China Intercultural School have an opportunity to develop empathy for other cultures. The student said, “When you interact with people from different cultures, you realize that there are reasons for difference and you gain empathy.” Again describing the school environment, another student said being interculturally sensitive is easy at China Intercultural School, because, “I think there is such an appreciation of different cultures here and it seems to blend so effortlessly, especially compared to my experience in the U.S. where I was where before.” Numerous students in the focus group simply stated “empathy” when asked about a definition for intercultural sensitivity. This was qualified

more, specifically, by one student commenting, “As I've gotten older I've seen more of the world and I'm very interested in different cultures, so I'm embracing it. But, when I show other people, like my friends back in the States, it's culture shock. They're not used to it. It's different. It's scary for them.”

Adding an aspect not mentioned by the other stakeholders, students agreed that only a person who is secure in their own culture and believes there is no one culture more superior than another, can intercultural sensitivity be accomplished. Time and time again, students pointed to the importance of understanding their own culture as a necessary facet of intercultural sensitivity. By having an understanding and awareness of one's own culture, a person is more prepared and secure to accept and be more empathetic to other cultures. As one student affirmed, “ I think that it's understanding your cultural background, and being a little sensitive to what you believe in your culture, and what you know about your culture.” This idea was supported by another student who stated, “I kind of understood that maybe by being sensitive to your own culture, it allows you to kind of see what other people might be going through in terms of understanding the culture.”

**Summary of stakeholder definitions.** When defining intercultural sensitivity all stakeholders describe the importance of first recognizing that there are differences between cultures. They describe that it is this awareness of difference and acknowledgement of difference from which intercultural sensitivity can further develop. All stakeholders also describe a second aspect of intercultural sensitivity as being open-minded or not judgmental of these differences. From these foundational aspects of

recognizing difference and being open-minded on which they have in common, stakeholder groups differ on how they define the other aspects of intercultural sensitivity.

Whereas, parents describe a third aspect of intercultural sensitivity as respecting difference, students as having empathy, teachers describe it differently as being curious and attempting to understand the difference. The teachers seem to discuss the idea of understanding cultural difference, because it relates to their role as an educator working with diverse parents and students. Recognizing that parents and students at China Intercultural School come from different cultures, teachers who are curious and open to understanding different cultural viewpoints is viewed as demonstrating intercultural sensitivity.

Parents and students both define a fourth aspect of intercultural sensitivity as embracing difference. Only the students, in both focus group interviews and in individual follow-up interviews, added that having an awareness of one's own culture is an aspect of intercultural sensitivity. Table 2 below presents a summary of the aspects the different stakeholders assign to defining intercultural sensitivity.

Table 2	
<i>Definitions of student intercultural sensitivity</i>	
Teachers	recognizing difference open-minded to difference curiosity and understanding of difference
Parents	recognizing difference open-minded to difference respecting difference embracing difference
Students	recognizing difference open-minded to difference empathy for difference embracing difference awareness of one's own culture

**Research Question Two.** *What are the similarities and differences among teacher, parent and student views of the ways student intercultural sensitivity is developed at an international school in China?*

**Teachers.** Being international school teachers who are currently teaching in a school outside of their home country, teacher participants were able to reflect on their own development of intercultural sensitivity while sharing their views on this research question. All teachers confirmed they have experienced the phenomenon of intercultural sensitivity in one way or another, and are still even developing intercultural sensitivity themselves. Some teachers were exposed to cultural difference at a young age, where one focus group participant considered himself a Third Culture Kid (TCK), having grown up attending high school outside of his home country of the USA. Opposite this participant's experience, one teacher spoke of not having experienced cultural difference until later in his adult life, when he moved from New Zealand to Korea for the first time.

Nonetheless, teacher comments all spoke to some general themes about how student intercultural sensitivity is developed.

According to teachers, one way intercultural sensitivity develops is by moving and having a significant intercultural life experience in a location outside of their home culture. Teachers described this type of event as provoking a process of moving towards becoming more interculturally sensitive and is indicative of one way students gain intercultural sensitivity. Reflecting on his own experience, one teacher focus group participant described teaching on a Native American reservation for the first time. Another teacher described moving to a different state to teach, and interacting with colleagues from different countries other than the USA, like Australia, New Zealand, or South Africa. These ideas from teachers can be captured by the one teacher who commented, “I’ve had other experiences in my life, and I realized with every one of those, my worldview changed. I think somehow expanding your worldview makes you more sensitive, makes you understand the differences that there are.” In an individual follow up interview, this idea of a significant cultural experience was expanded upon. A teacher said, “I think that’s critical (moving outside of your home culture). Like most people will say, if it’s their first time overseas as teachers, certainly as children too, your worldview changes when you have an experience like that.”

As teachers described students experiencing the development of intercultural sensitivity at China Intercultural School, they also discussed how being in the presence and interacting with others from different cultures was a foundational concept for developing intercultural sensitivity. Described more clearly, one teacher said, “just by

being with children from different countries, and backgrounds, and that kind of thing, they're going to get a little bit of intercultural sensitivity, but I don't know that it automatically means that they are.” Adding more detail, teachers focus group participants also described that the more interactions one has with those who are from a different culture, the more sensitive one becomes. Supported by other teachers, one teacher described their personal development of intercultural sensitivity stating, “from traveling the world and being exposed to a variety of different cultures, the more I travel, the more open minded I become, and the more accepting I become.”

Offering one more additional narrative on the ways that student intercultural sensitivity is developed, teachers generally agreed that students were more interculturally sensitive than teachers. Providing evidence to this idea, one teacher in the focus group who was describing his experience with colleagues said, “I am finding that intercultural sensitivity with the students isn't too bad. I find often lagging behind are the people...explaining it and presenting it to students. They, themselves are encouraging it, but they themselves don't realize they aren't that (interculturally sensitive.)” Another teacher specified, “I think perhaps we underestimate the intercultural sensitivity that our kids currently have. I question in some ways that it needs to be taught. They have been with each other and they have all come from different places, but they have something in common and it's school. They know everybody's strengths and weaknesses. They have mixed friend groups.”

Corroborating this theme further, teacher views demonstrated that they felt less confident about being able to serve as an intercultural mentor, even with the vast

intercultural life experiences and having worked in other international settings. Teachers felt less confident without specific training. One teacher confirmed this sentiment saying, “I think with something as big as this (intercultural sensitivity), you do have to be prepared as educators and you will have to reflect on self before you can do a good job in moving forward.” Another teacher view reflected similarly, “I think it can be trained, we are all different, some people are very sensitive to one another, and some of them aren't.” Teachers also reflected on the counseling curriculum at the school as one possible avenue for developing intercultural sensitivity, but viewed the current program as too American centric to reach the goal of facilitating or “teaching” intercultural sensitivity.

In summary, teachers’ views seem to validate that moving to live and work or study in a different culture, along with being in the presence and interacting with others from a different culture, are the main ways student intercultural sensitivity develops.

**Parents.** Describing how intercultural sensitivity is developed, parents were also able to draw from their own experiences, as well as what they have witnessed through the experiences of their children. All of the 11 parents interviewed had lived in other countries, besides China.

Similar to teachers and students, but stated differently, parents agree that intercultural sensitivity develops through having experiences that pushes one outside of one’s cultural comfort zone. Positive or negative experiences were viewed as being able to increase one’s intercultural sensitivity. For instance describing her family’s move to China coming from Indonesia one parent in the focus group said, “We're Indonesian, but Chinese and can't speak Chinese. When my kids arrived here, they struggled a lot. In

Indonesia, they were brought up that we're not supposed to ask questions and wait until you've been asked. They're not outspoken. But here is different. Now, they have adjusted and they're more American.”

Parents also view exposure to other cultures as a necessary factor for the development of intercultural sensitivity, but through friendships. Different than what was expressed by teachers and more similar to students, parents discussed having intimate and meaningful interactions with those from other cultures as important in helping to develop intercultural sensitivity. Along with this idea parents were able to add that the earlier this exposure to cultural difference takes place in a student's life, the more opportunity there is for intercultural sensitivity to develop more deeply overtime.

This was stated simply by one parent, who said, ‘If you only live in one culture, of course, you can't develop intercultural sensitivity. Exposure to other cultures brings like a certain sensitivity to embracing and accepting different cultures.” Parents all cited evidence of this happening with their children. Discussing her elementary child one parent in the focus group described her daughter who has plethora of friends in her classroom from different cultures. She said, “They get invited over (to a classmates house) and they're like, I learned this, or they're doing this.” From parent views, this repetitive exposure over time appears to add to a student's development of intercultural sensitivity.

**Students.** When it comes to describing how intercultural sensitivity is developed, a majority of students described a significant life experience that caused them to become deeply immersed into another culture challenging what they knew to be familiar. The



experiences described by students were a combination of positive and negative experiences and caused them to think differently and take on an alternative perspective.

One student affirmed, “you don't have to have positive interactions in order to develop intercultural sensitivity.” Having had the luxury of living in other locations prior to coming to China, students spoke to the power of these experiences and how it had shaped their individual development of intercultural sensitivity. For example, one student in the focus group described a life changing experience as, “For me personally, it was definitely the process of moving to Brazil. That was the moment where I can divide my life, between before that happened and after.” Another student described a similar experience, “I know since I moved to China at the beginning it was really hard to do because of culture shock. But, I think I found that after you get over that, the years I’ve spent here in China have been some of the most richly rewarding in terms of becoming closer with people of other cultures.” Describing it more deeply, one student in an individual follow-up interview expounded, “You're daily reminded that there are these differences in cultural norms. You have to learn because you're living in their country. You have to learn how to adapt to their norms.”

Similar to parents, students also point to the importance of being exposed to individuals from other cultures that lead to friendships as a factor in developing intercultural sensitivity. Students were able to describe how this contact with difference has occurred while at school. Described by one student in this way, “If you're in a traditional Chinese school, everything is very Chinese orientated. There's no third culture or any external factor that's being brought into that system to teach you specifically what

is intercultural sensitivity. Whereas here, we have all sorts of different backgrounds, so we kind of understand to a certain degree different people's cultures.”

Much of this exposure to other cultures comes through friendships students make while at school and then leads to experiences outside of school. For example, one student described, “I think the major way that CIS promotes (intercultural sensitivity) is by promoting friendship between people, who maybe wouldn't have met under normal circumstances. Promoting friendship between students then allows these conversations to occur, leading to understanding cultural differences.” Describing in more detail, a Western student described his friendship with a Chinese student saying, “ I would almost say, he taught me more Chinese, than I learned in my one year of Chinese class, just through out of school experiences. We go to interesting, fun and cool places together.” Without having an experience outside of their home culture and be being exposed or immersed into another culture, students believe that it would be difficult to develop intercultural sensitivity. One student clarified the views of the group as, “When we read about cultural differences in our textbook, it's very abstract...and removed. But when you move into another culture, then all the sudden what was very abstract becomes part of your everyday reality.”

Like other stakeholders and related to the idea of exposure to other cultures, students also believe that the more experience one has with cultural difference the more interculturally sensitive one becomes. One student supports this saying, “As I've gotten older and had more experiences, I've seen more of the world and I'm very interested in different cultures.” However, while students recognize that this exposure is necessary

and important, it is not enough to develop intercultural sensitivity. It does not happen through osmosis. Affirmed by one student who said, “we do need to have this exposure, but I think there has to be something more.” The student elaborated on this idea clarifying, that a person has to embrace this exposure and have the motivation to want to learn more about the other culture.

**Summary of views.** Table 3 below represents the views of the different stakeholder groups related to what ways they believe intercultural sensitivity is developed at an international school in China. The research question reflects an investigation into the similarities and differences among teacher, parent and student views. Although somewhat similar, the table represents the subtle differences in the views expressed by stakeholders. Adding additional detail to support the main themes, teachers, parents, and students views also indicate that the more intercultural experience one has, the more their intercultural sensitivity grows.

Table 3		
<i>Views of the ways student intercultural sensitivity is developed</i>		
<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Students</u>
Moving to live/work/study in another culture	Experience outside of one’s cultural comfort zone	Immersion into a different culture
Interacting with individuals from a different culture	Intimate and meaningful interactions with those from a different culture	Friendships with those from a different culture

**Research Question Three.** *What are teacher, parent and student views regarding individual factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China?*

**Teachers.** Based on the focus group and individual interview results, teachers indicate that the level of parent intercultural sensitivity is a main individual factor influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity. Noting that many of the students at China Intercultural School have lived in various countries and having already noted that this process is a factor for the development of intercultural sensitivity, teachers acknowledge that parents still have significant influence on what students believe about other cultures. In answering this question, teachers reflected that this parental influence and expectations can be positive or negative, based on the intercultural experience of the parent and the strength of their intercultural sensitivity within the family unit. For example, one teacher in the focus group explained, “Parental influence, because the kid could have lived in all these different countries, and the kid could have most of his or her life defined outside of the country, but the parents may not have.” Teachers were able to further support this claim by referencing the different parenting styles they have witnessed between different cultures. One teacher recapped this point by saying, “what your parents teach you and that is what you are used to with your parents, that's going to have an impact on you.” Related to this idea, a teacher in the individual follow-up interview described and supported that this also appears to be correlated to where parents were educated, either in China or internationally. Teacher views tend to reflect the idea that Asian parents who were educated or lived in other countries prior to the current location tended to be more open-minded and display characteristics of intercultural sensitivity, also reflected in their child. However, this view may be correlated to their understanding of the American educational process, not necessarily intercultural

sensitivity.

Teachers described the level of parent intercultural sensitivity as both a contributor to the development of student intercultural sensitivity and also a potential barrier. If a cultural bias exists in the family home, teacher's view this as a barrier to the development of a student's intercultural sensitivity. In describing parental influence, some teachers mentioned that this may also influence the school's ability to put efforts toward the development of student intercultural sensitivity. The development of student intercultural sensitivity would need to be recognized as important to the parents in order for it to take hold in the school. As described by one teacher in the focus group, "Perhaps parents have a different goal for child, that is not intercultural sensitivity. Did they choose our school, because it is an American school or an international school."

Another factor, but viewed more as a barrier to the development of intercultural sensitivity, and mentioned by one teacher in the focus group interview was student use of technology. Given that today's students are sophisticated users of technology it is important to note that more teachers may view this as a potential barrier to development of intercultural sensitivity. The teacher described this as, "I am seeing our kids are so much more connected, but they have never been more isolated." That is a personal factor I am noticing amongst our students and that goes across all cultures, whether it's Asian, American." There was general consensus and acknowledgement among the teachers in the focus group that this was an idea they also supported.

**Parents.** Parent views confirm the impact of the family unit and specifically parent values as a primary individual factors influencing the development of student

intercultural sensitivity. This is clearly reflected in numerous statements from parent participants in the focus groups. “Family core values, how a parent guides their child, and what is emphasized in the home is one of the largest individual influencer,” says one parent in the focus group supported by others with comments like, “because as parents we are very fixated about setting ideas or values, we tend to influence our kids.” Lending further credit to this theme, one parent in the focus group interview described their own upbringing in China and the learning of traditional cultural rules and practices. The Chinese heritage parent described the influence of her traditional Chinese parents on how to sit and dress. These influences were framed around traditional cultural norms, that are not so prevalent in modern day China. The parent described strict cultural norms as a barrier to the development of intercultural sensitivity. Likewise a parent in the individual follow-up interview described this influence in another way. The Chinese parent was describing how because of her intercultural understanding of Western norms, she had to guide her student in how to function within a new school environment. The parent said, “We have been purposely sharing with our son the protocols of communication. You know in Eastern and the Western culture it’s different. Both my husband and I work in multinational companies and over a period of time you realize you're communication style is different from the people in the West.”

However, even though parents believe their values are the main influencer on the development of their child’s intercultural sensitivity, interesting, they also acknowledge the fact that their students may be more interculturally sensitive than they are, which has also helped parents to become more interculturally sensitive themselves. For example,

describing an interaction with her child, causing her to reflect on her own intercultural sensitivity, one parent in the focus group described her son as, “Sometimes he talks to me and his father. He says, “Hey, you guys are judgmental.” Another parent described a similar experience where her son describing another student’s dress at the school, said, “Mom, this is their choice. Whatever they do it’s their choice, we have to respect that. That is one of the thing I learn from my kids. We are judgmental.” Parents tend to appreciate that their children are more open-minded and accommodating to differences than they might be. This appears to be a combination of both a natural generational difference and the fact that students are growing up in an intercultural environment, different from their parents. As described above, parents describe being raised with more traditionally framed cultural practices. One parent confirmed this idea by saying, “they are more tolerant, because they don’t have this same cultural view in mind, like I do.”

Another insight that the parent stakeholders provide is the importance of one’s interaction with their home country. Many of the students live outside of their home culture or country. Either through a summer trip home, interactions with family or friends at home, or being immersed back in one’s home country, this re-orientation with home culture appears to have an impact on a student’s development of intercultural sensitivity. As one interviewee in the focus group described it this way, “It’s like the fish doesn’t recognize the water, until it’s out of the water.” This is an analogy to describe a student’s discovery of their own intercultural sensitivity, but is only able to have this discovery after a return home and connection with home country or culture. Parents spoke that as it is essential to be exposed to other and new cultures for the development

of intercultural sensitivity, it is equally important to return to one's own country, which give appears to provide an additional rise in one's development of one's identity and intercultural sensitivity. Further emphasizing this idea of having a sense of one's home culture, one parent in the follow-up interview explained how her son lacked this identity because of their transient international lifestyle. Not having this was perceived as a regret and a negative factor. As she described, "He has learned to be very adaptive to the environment, new teachers, new classmates, new culture, new environments, but he doesn't really have a sense of home." Parents describe this sense of belonging and understanding of one's home culture is developed through opportunities that bring students in contact with their home country. For example, one parent described taking their child back to their home country for summer camp.

Parents also shared experiences of how their children have developed intercultural sensitivity through family experiences, like trips and international moves. One parent in the focus group described the many travel experiences they have been afforded due to living an international lifestyle. Overtime, these shared family experiences help develop a student's intercultural sensitivity. As the parent described, "For me, I think exposure and these trips also bring our children or ourselves a sense of confidence that you can move through the world without really having to know the language, or having to know a lot of things." Another parent in the focus group describing their family moves supported saying, "When we were asked to move here, we had a tenth grader and a fifth grader and a second grader. So we said to the kids, we've been asked to move to Shanghai, who would like to go? Because we had lived in Holland for eight years, every



one of my children raised their hand, and my high schooler was the first.” Adding on describing the benefits of moving on the development of intercultural sensitivity, but also highlighting some of the potential issues of a Third Culture Kid experience, one parent in the follow-up interview added her son seems to be saying, “anywhere could be the home, but you don't really have a sense of home.”

As described above, parent values, contact with home culture, including shared family experiences are important individual factors in the development of their child's development of intercultural sensitivity. However, they also recognize that the school can also have a role on the development of student intercultural sensitivity. This is reflected in this comment from a parent, “The core value in your home, what you teach your kids what to do, and what you believe, are important, but then the partnership is also coming from school.”

**Students.** When describing the individual factors that influence the development of intercultural sensitivity, similar to teachers and parents, high school students also spoke about the influence and guidance of parents. As 18 year old's in their final year of high school, this appears to be a natural reflection on their own development of intercultural sensitivity over the years. Students discussed the power of parental guidance and their “upbringing” on the development of this intercultural sensitivity. Parents appear to be able to play the role of their “cultural mentor,” not to be confused with “intercultural mentor,” as many students believe their parents are more rooted in their home culture than they are. This may have to do with the international environment in which these students have been raised. Due to their transient upbringing, students may

feel less connected to their “home culture,” where their parents are viewed as “more in touch” with their heritage and traditional home culture. When compared to their parents, students appear to live within an environment where more assimilation between cultures exists. They believe their parents, may not view it this way or experience it as they do. Evidence of this fact is reflected by one student comment in the focus group saying, “by having our parents, they are able to bring about a deeper level to our culture, that we don’t always know.”

Similar to parent views, students also indicated a return to their home culture or country as a factor in influencing the development of their intercultural sensitivity. Describing their return to the United States, one American student in the focus group was able to describe this idea by saying, “I guess that was the point where I realized that my culture is actually so much more different from all the other cultures. It’s also the point that I realized that every culture has their own uniqueness to it, and lets you understand the real meaning behind why they do what they do and where they come from in a sense.” Describing this same idea, but from an Asian point of view of an Asian student returning to China, one student in a focus group said, “When I came here I was able to learn Chinese with other Chinese people, and to celebrate Chinese New Year with my grandparents. And I think that has also shaped my respect for my own culture, as well as my respect for other cultures.”

In addition to parent guidance and a return to their home culture, students emphasized another factor influencing the development of their intercultural sensitivity is who they surround themselves with and who they interact with, in other words, friends.

One student in a focus group interview spoke to the power of this factor saying, “nothing compares to having friends from other places. So, for me, nothing the school does, or nothing the school could do, would ever reach that.” A different student matched this view confirming, that friend groups represent “the biggest form of cultural mingling at the school, and therefore increasing intercultural sensitivity.” Describing the influence of friends a student in the focus group enhanced this theme by describing how the social dynamics of diverse friend groups allow for an intercultural experience. She said, “I think sometimes it's the people that you're around, the social factors. Depending on the group of people that you are around, some people may push you to join their culture and bring you along forcefully, or others might be slower, where you are able to ease into it.”

Stated by students in focus groups, individual motivation was an additional individual factor that can help develop one's intercultural sensitivity. Students spoke of having an appreciation, excitement, and motivation for wanting to learn about another culture. As one American student in the focus group explained, “I'm totally obsessed with Korea and K-pop. Because of K-pop, I got obsessed with Asia, therefore I had no problem moving here (China).” This idea complements the aspects students talked about earlier in their definition of intercultural sensitivity. In their definition of intercultural sensitivity, students emphasized embracing and having the desire to learn more about other cultures as an essential aspect and of intercultural sensitivity. Another student in an individual follow-up interview elaborated on this idea of motivation explaining, “For me it's the idea of pushing yourself. It's very much a personal factor, a personal decision to understand or to reject other cultures. So, I think in order to promote intercultural

sensitivity cultural, there's a lot of things the school can do, a lot of things your friends can do. But, ultimately it's up to the individual to decide that I'm going to be motivated and open minded to try and understand other people.” Another student in the focus group described it this way. Describing his move to Korea where he didn't understand the culture at first he said, “instead of not having any friends, I forced myself to reach out to them. I would ask my friends and be like hey, teach me a few lines of Korean. And at the school every Friday, they would go to youth group, which was Christian and where they sang songs. I'm not Christian, but I went to the youth group because I wanted to see what it's like and see their perspective.”

And although not expressed as a strong variable students viewed knowing a second language as a secondary variable that can help build one's intercultural sensitivity. The importance of this individual skill is reflected in the comment from this student in a focus group stating, “There are certain untranslatable words that you can only understand if you speak that language, or you understand this part of cultures. Understanding another language brings a person the awareness that some things are acceptable in one culture, but may not be acceptable in another culture is an assumption shared by students. Further expounded upon, one student in the focus group said, “if you want to make other friends and they're all speaking a different language, then it's hard to connect, if you don't know their language.”

**Summary of individual factors.** In summary of individual factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity all the teachers, parents and student stakeholders recognize the primary role that parents play in the development of student

intercultural sensitivity. This is either through the level of parent intercultural sensitivity, parent values or parental guidance. Parents and students both describe how intercultural sensitivity can be further developed by a return to one's home culture or country. This return to one's home country appears to provide students with the recognition that they have changed from their experience abroad and are more interculturally sensitive than before the experience. Perhaps blending with their role as a parent, parents discuss parent values and family experiences, like international trips and moves to other countries which bring the student in contact with different cultures as an additional way students gain intercultural sensitivity. Students also recognize the role of parents and how they can provide guidance. However, students also identify the role that friends play in their development of intercultural sensitivity. While teachers discuss a student's technology use as a factor, students describe one's individual motivation to want to learn more about other cultures and second language ability as additional factors.

Table 4		
<i>Views regarding individual factors</i>		
<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Students</u>
Level of parent intercultural sensitivity	Parent values	Parental guidance
Student technology use	Contact with home culture	Contact with home culture
	Family intercultural experiences	Diverse Friends
		Motivation to learn about other cultures
		Second language ability

**Research Question Four.** *What are teacher, parent and student views regarding institutional factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China?*

**Teachers.** In regard to the institutional factors influencing the development of intercultural sensitivity, teachers spoke mostly about the organizational practices and policies of the school in focus group interviews. For example, one teacher commented, “I really think that organizations play a huge role in developing intercultural sensitivity. Our policies and mission strives towards intercultural sensitivity, but some may not.” Teachers confirmed that there are mechanisms in the system of organizations that can lend itself to create an environment for intercultural sensitivity to develop inside of the school, or also serve as a barrier to the development of intercultural sensitivity. Reflecting on the power of the institution in this way, one teacher’s comment reflects the majority of the views for the teachers in the focus groups, “definitely the organization really acts as a motor to getting it started.”

Three areas of organizational policy that teachers described were the largest influences were marketing, admissions and hiring policies. In this specific study at China Intercultural School, teachers believed that the marketing of the school can promote the concept of intercultural sensitivity. However, teachers were generally critical of the current marketing of the school as too American and not encouraging an intercultural or international environment. Their commentaries reflect that parent interest may have influenced the school to present itself as more American than international. For example,

one teacher in the focus group described this in this way, “I find sometimes our parents have a certain set of expectations about what school is and the kids have a certain set, and as teachers we have a third set of expectations.” Described more in detail in a follow-up interview, a teacher described parents perhaps choosing the school with the main goal of getting their child into a top university in the USA. However, the teachers’ main objective might be to promote deep learning and more of the soft skills, like intercultural sensitivity or ethical global citizenship, which is a transdisciplinary transfer goal at the school. The students’ objective may fall somewhere in the middle, between these two forces. Describing students, the teacher explained, “They’re learning a culture here in school, and it might be different from what the parents think their learning and it causes this conflict.” Teachers believe the school’s marketing could serve a role in clarifying the schools’ commitment to internationalism and transfer goals, such as student intercultural sensitivity.

Second to this, teachers acknowledge the power of building a diverse student body through the admission process, much like they acknowledged the importance of a diverse teaching staff as a factor that influences the development of student intercultural sensitivity. Assuming the role that exposure and interaction to difference has in developing intercultural sensitivity, teachers explained that this can be cultivated through a diverse student body, where students have the opportunity to come in contact and interact with students from different nationalities and cultures. Speaking as a potential barrier to the development of student intercultural sensitivity at China Intercultural School, one teacher in the focus group commented, “My concern is, the demographics of

our school is changing a bit,” while a different teacher said, “Who we admit helps with creating that environment.” Admissions of diverse students from different countries was appreciated as a factor for developing student intercultural sensitivity by the teachers.

In regard to the hiring policy at China Intercultural School, teachers saw the value of a diverse teaching staff, as well. Although teachers didn’t view themselves as being able to serve in the role of intercultural mentor without training, they did share in the value a diverse staff brings to the environment of an international school.

Teachers indicated that because of the different countries they all come from, it adds value and opportunity for intercultural sensitivity to develop. This is another area where the views of teachers described that the hiring policy might be limiting the development of intercultural sensitivity and becoming too “Americanized.” One teacher in the focus group explained, “I actually recall an interview that I had in order to get this position in which I was actually told that our clientele expects American teachers.” One teacher from the Southern Hemisphere made the point of how a diverse teaching staff can contribute to the development of intercultural sensitivity, stating, “As a non-American teacher, we see things that Americans generally don’t.” Another teacher added, “I think with the background of most of our teachers, we’re from different places, so we come with different ideas of how to impact kids. One teacher on our staff has a New Zealand background. They have a large Maori population, and that may come into some of his conversations or some of the readings, maybe not in math, that he would share with kids.”



Second, in regard to not feeling confident to serve in the role of intercultural mentor for students a teacher stated, “I think we can be trained for it (intercultural sensitivity). We are all different. Some people are very sensitive to another culture and some aren't. But, being educators I think we can try to be models, because we all coming from different cultural backgrounds.” A teacher in the focus group followed by saying, “I think with something as big as this (intercultural sensitivity) you do have to be prepared as educators, and you will have to reflect on self before you can do a good job in moving it forward.”

Possibly the most prevalent practice recognized by teachers of an institutional factor that leads to the development of intercultural sensitivity were comments about class trips that bring the students in contact with the host Chinese culture. At China Intercultural School these are referred to as *China Alive* trips. Teachers talked about the value of these trips, because they expose students to situations where they are experiencing something new and different. They believed these experiences create opportunities where intercultural sensitivity becomes, “like osmosis, and it sinks in,” as one teacher in the focus group commented. Similar to what students say about the development of intercultural sensitivity, teachers views reflect that intercultural sensitivity is more likely to develop through loosely structured activities, like these trips, which are more likely beyond the scope of the curriculum or any specific class. As one teacher stated in the focus group summarizing what a majority of teachers spoke about in different ways, “I would say experiences, I think it (intercultural sensitivity) is best taught

through experiences, whether you are realizing you are having those experiences or not, it doesn't matter.”

Comparable to parents and students, teachers also described co-curricular activities ranging from clubs to sports as an institutional factor for the development of student intercultural sensitivity. Describing a recent forensics tournament where a number of other schools were participating, a teacher summarized their views in this way. “At the tournament students are presenting to a forum and doing speeches. We had nine very different school groups and students who had to interact with each other and there were some differences. Some schools were from the Philippines, two Korean schools, plus Christian schools, as well.” Teachers described how these forensic students had to consider the different viewpoints of the schools and to navigate this diversity, required use of intercultural sensitivity. Further supporting co-curricular activities another teacher stated, “We have all these different clubs and they have the opportunity to pursue these things. I think that creates that empathy for different cultures.” Another teacher in the focus group explained, “Through my sponsorship of activities and sports, I see how the kids interact in their down time and what kind of foods they might buy, or who is more savvy to use a foreign language or something. Observing what kind of habits or traditions they bring with them to a competition or a game is really interesting and their friends pick up on this.”

As with other stakeholders, only a few of the teacher views reflected the role curriculum plays in the development of student intercultural sensitivity. Of those views, all were related primarily to the International Baccalaureate classes and specifically the

IB Language and Literature class. One teacher noted that because of the IB framework it is easier to do this stating, “it's built into the IB philosophy where they (the students) have to be global ethical citizens.” Another IB teacher also in the focus group stated, “I'm fortunate, because I teach the curriculum with ethics and morals. We can approach things with different perspectives and is easy for to add an intercultural perspective.” Comments also reflected that there is an opportunity at China Intercultural School to be more intentional and about how one could integrate intercultural sensitivity into other subject matter including mathematics, but may not be happening at the moment.

**Parents.** Endorsing that intercultural sensitivity does in fact develop within the ethos of the school, one parent in the focus group was able to depict what this looks like and shared evidence of it developing in her child, and for which the international school is responsible. This came from what she noticed in her own child when they had returned to the States for university. She said, “ When she went to the USA for college and she compared herself to the other classmates who grew up domestically in the U.S. schools, the difference was very obvious. The difference was she moved so many times and experienced so many other things than just a local school, and a local city in the USA.”

Parents views validate the influence the school institution has on the development of student intercultural sensitivity and were able to draw from experiences at the current school and prior international school experiences. Of all the ways that intercultural sensitivity can be developed within the ethos of an international school, one main factor seems to rise to the top. Parent thoughts reflected the view that the more welcoming and inviting a school community is, the more likely student intercultural sensitivity can

develop. Parent participation in the school community through either the PTSA, culture liaisons, school events was seen as a key factor in developing community, and thus student intercultural sensitivity. Parents described that this community spirit is built through school cultural events that bring the community together, like a carnival, an international food fair, community activities on campus during the weekend, etc. Parents said that by bringing all the teachers, parents and students together in this way allows for a natural integration of all members of the community to connect and learn from each other. Describing this experience one parent in the focus group said, “It becomes a family union. The parents are with the kids and everybody is helping.” This is supported by the openness from the faculty members. As one parent commented, “It’s one of the main factors that actually make us feel a sense of belonging and to be proud.” Drawing on her experience at a prior school, one parent explained that she was able to use the track and pool. Practices like this helped strengthen the community which helped build opportunities for the exchange of ideas between the different cultures at the school and between the parent community in a very natural way.

Parents also expressed the significance of school cultural events where the parent community is collaborating together and there are opportunities for kids to wear their national dress or try different food. Stated simply by one parent, “Those efforts help the kids, because obviously food is big part of culture.” One parent commented and others agreed, “Those different kind of events, cultural events or either dramas or Korean treat day, can help a lot because we have students and teachers from different countries to recognize and celebrate.”

As far as other factors, parents acknowledged the importance of the diversity of the student body. They viewed this as an asset that helped create natural exposure opportunities to the other cultures within the classrooms and hallways of the school for their children. This idea captured by one parent who said, “This (diversity) is a great part of our school and is beneficial for our children, that many family come from many cultures, many countries, backgrounds and language backgrounds. This huge diversity brings a great benefit for our children to become open minded and accepting for differences.” Stressing the importance of a diverse student body, one Chinese parent in an individual follow-up interview expressed concern for the potential loss of this diversity in the future at the school. She warned, “I can see the way my child’s friend circle has shifted. Here you have a high percentage of Chinese and my kids being Chinese, naturally their closest friends are Chinese.”

Like students, parents also acknowledged the role co-curricular activities play in helping to develop intercultural sensitivity. Parents were able to describe the experiences that their children have had on the fields, stages and through co-curricular activities that connected their children to cultural differences. Described by one parent in the focus group this way, “From my personal knowledge, it's getting folks together, in the same place, same time, for a long period of time and working on something they're interested in, like clubs or groups.” Adding on to this point in a follow-up interview, a parent described the school as having a lot of activities, “They're doing activities and kids meet other people with various background and then they make friends.”

**Students.** A major theme prevalent in student views on what is important with any efforts to develop student intercultural sensitivity inside of the school is that it must be done thoughtfully in a loose, natural, unstructured way. They described that trying to develop student intercultural sensitivity works best when school leaders create the fertile environment for students of different cultures to learn from each other in an unstructured way. This is the opposite to a forced, scripted approach. Most students in the focus groups were critical of a prior year initiative that tried to mix different grade levels into a common advisory class a couple times a week. The activity did have an aspect of attempting to build student intercultural sensitivity, but as described by a student, “The activities weren't very productive in terms of helping each other communicate, because it was sort of like watch movies together, activities that don't really promote conversation.” This student comment may be indicative of what teachers also said about their lack of confidence in serving as an intercultural mentor, without specific training and support.

Most students interviewed indicated that efforts that allow students to connect in natural authentic ways is a factor influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity. For example, ‘I feel like if there is forced activities, people usually tend to not be so engaged. So, I feel like, it should be a very gradual and smooth process.’ Complemented by another student in the focus group detailed, “I think maybe loose, unforced activities that could help us understand culture are of value. If it's forced, no one wants to learn something that's forced and not interesting.” Confirming this view another student commented, “When it’s really fun and active, or maybe just enjoyable, I

think that's easier for people to maybe be more accepting, or be introduced to other kind of cultures.”

Describing this theme of unforced natural opportunities that students self-select into, students were able to cite numerous examples connected to co-curricular activities being a major institutional factor influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity. Students described how participation in sports like rugby, basketball, band and clubs like Model United Nations (MUN) brought them closer to understanding students from other cultures, thus gaining intercultural sensitivity. This is reflected by a student comment from the focus group who said, “The thing that brought us together was the shared interest in the sport, but that doesn't necessarily mean we have similar backgrounds, or we would be the typical group that would hang out outside of the sports team.” Co-curricular activities appear to be more successful in developing intercultural sensitivity than curricular or required activities, as students self-select into the activity because of their interest. Another activity based on comments, that specifically seems to be directly responsible for facilitating intercultural sensitivity at China Intercultural School is MUN. The strength of MUN is reflected in an individual follow-up interview where a student commented, “I think that it (intercultural sensitivity) is a big part of MUN. MUN is understanding that different cultures inform different decisions. And those decisions ultimately reflect on how the government acts for that particular country.”

As far as co-curricular sports at China Intercultural School, rugby was cited numerous times as an example of how intercultural sensitivity can develop on the field. Students described how spending time on the practice field with people they would not

normally connect with during the school day, helped them to learn about each other's cultures. It is through the course of the season and extended time together where students learn through numerous mini-interactions with each other. As one student described, "It's through people having shared experiences. I think games and sports and activities provide this, where people see how different they are and how similar. More important, how similar they are."

As students described the structure of co-curricular activities as a factor in the development of intercultural sensitivity, they also described how the diversity of teaching staff is a factor for facilitating the development of student intercultural sensitivity. This diversity of staff was cited as a factor both in co-curricular activities and also in the classroom. For example on the rugby field, students talked about coaches coming from New Zealand, Australia, Wales and the USA. Because of their different cultural approaches on how to play and the strategy for the game, the coaches were able to share this with the students. As described in the focus group the student explained, "Our head coach used his own terminology for certain plays or for certain moves. And then, so did our other coach. Each of them had their own sets of terms for describing the same thing. That was interesting and just exemplifies different cultures coming together." Thus, the students believed they gained an intercultural perspective on the sport, that would not have been possible had the teachers all been from the same culture or country.

Furthermore, students also described how this diversity of teaching staff can be a factor in the classroom, especially as it related to their IB English Language and Literature class. They described a teacher who is from South Africa. They described



how this teacher has helped them become more interculturally sensitivity by exposing them to different types of texts from different parts of the world and authors, because of his background. These texts have helped them be more aware leading to a deeper understanding of different cultures and viewpoints. Unlike a class like Chemistry where the laws of Chemistry are universal across cultures, students describe that it appears easier to integrate strategies for the development of intercultural sensitivity in their IB English Language and Literature class. As one student in the focus group explained, “Literature is not universal across cultures.” Because teachers hail from countries like South Africa, the USA, and New Zealand, students state they have gained a broader perspective on which to view and understand concepts and situations.

Students in both the focus group interviews and individual follow-up interviews, regularly spoke to the importance of exposure to others with dissimilar cultural norms and practices. They described how a diverse student body, creates an opportunity for students to learn from each other in a natural, casual way. Students believe that learning within an environment with diverse learners from other cultures, countries has been significant in their development of intercultural sensitivity. For example one student in the focus group described it this way. He described, “I remember being placed in Cub Scouts...it was all very new to me...the things like the Thanksgiving dinners and the camping trips, those were things that you can't really do in my culture (Korean). I tried to assimilate into and integrate into both cultures. But being really young I felt like an outlier in the group. As I got older, I realized that it's not just me that feels that way, and so I kind of took that and made myself develop this sensitivity.” Another student in an

individual follow-up interview described how this became easier for him and cites an example of how his intercultural sensitivity grew over time. The student stated, “It was much easier for me to fit in here, because I had already gone through the experience of reaching out to people who are very unlike to me and becoming really good friends. I don't want to say it was a challenge, but that experience helps me make new friends everywhere.”

Although students consider that being able to communicate in a second language is valuable, they do not view it as an absolute necessity to becoming intercultural sensitive. However, they did speak to the structure of language class lending itself to the mixing of students from different cultures coming together to study a language. One student explained, “Because they're all new to China, and from different places their altogether getting exposed to one culture and one language.”

Contrary to what is written by intercultural researchers about “flags, food and festivals” not being a factor in the development of student intercultural sensitivity, according to the views of students, this may not be true (J. M. Bennett, & M. J. Bennett, 2004). Students spoke about this at length and articulated the discussion about how school cultural events like this help build the community and it is the process of the community building that leads to the development of intercultural sensitivity. For example students said, “I love all of the different foods and just learning everything.” Another student said, “I think that's very interesting, because when you have a friend from there, they're like, oh, this is food from my place. And then you get to try it, and you're like, this is really interesting and different from what I normally eat in Shanghai.”

Along the lines of what was previously stated about unstructured activities to bring students together, this supports this idea. Students expressed appreciation for activities like the Chinese New Year show and celebration, and special food days sponsored by the PTSA. Summarizing their ideas, one student commented, “By bringing that culture into our school helps everybody develop sensitivity to other cultures, like first-hand experience.”

In addition to co-curricular activities that are not a part of the formal curriculum of the school, students spoke to the success of school trips either for sports or class bonding trips that engage with the host culture as an effective factor in developing their intercultural sensitivity. As one student in the focus group commented, “When we went to Japan this year for tennis, although Japan's an east Asian country it has a very different culture from China, you see very different people, and you get exposed to different kinds of environments, maybe to realize the world is not as small as we think it is.” Class culture trips like *China Alive* which bring students in contact with the host culture of China were seen as valuable and effective, as well. This was also seen of value to students who might also be viewed as local or from the host Chinese culture. Students said, “Because a lot of kids, even though we're Chinese, we don't go to that part of the area in China. So, I think it was really nice to see how, even though we live in China, and we're really similar, we speak the same language and everything, but we still have different culture.”

**Summary of institutional factors.** When discussing the institutional factors that influence the develop of student intercultural sensitivity, teachers' views appear to be

teachercentric, centering around the organization and the teaching aspect of the school.

Teachers acknowledge the role of organizational policies, a diverse teaching staff, co-curricular activities, class trips and the International Baccalaureate framework. Unlike teachers, parents views tend to acknowledge the community aspect of a school and how a strong school community influences student intercultural sensitivity. Parents share views on school cultural events, a diverse student body and co-curricular activities. Students provided the most details about institutional factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity, speaking to the relevance of natural unforced activities, like clubs and sports. Supporting the idea of natural activities, students describe the appreciation for school cultural events and school trips that bring them into contact with the host culture in China or host culture on trips to other countries. A diverse teaching staff where students can experience different approaches to teaching is viewed as valuable by students. Finally, the International Baccalaureate framework appears to provide a framework for the enabling of intercultural sensitivity as do language classes. These views are summarized below in Table 5.

Table 5		
<i>Views regarding institutional factors</i>		
<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Students</u>
Organizational practices and policies	School community	Natural unforced school activities
Diverse student body	School cultural events	Co-curricular activities
Diverse teaching staff	Diverse student body	Diverse teaching staff
Contact with host culture through class trips	Co-curricular activities	IB framework
Co-curricular activities		Diverse student body
IB framework		Language classes
		School cultural events
		Contact with host culture through class trips

## Chapter Five

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine high school teacher, parent and teacher views of the factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China. First, a discussion of the findings is presented. This is followed by the finding's implications for school leadership and practice. Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are also presented.

#### Discussion of the Findings

**Definition of Intercultural Sensitivity.** Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) define intercultural sensitivity as, “the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural difference,” while Chen (1997) adds, intercultural sensitivity is an individual's ability to, “develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promote an appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication.” The combination of these two definitions has guided this study. Qualitative results from this study both confirm and expand these definitions of intercultural sensitivity. As Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) state that intercultural sensitivity is, “the ability to *discriminate* and *experience* relevant cultural difference,” teachers, parents and students similarly state that one must first *recognize* that there is a difference between cultures. Similarly, teachers, parents and students also define the aspect of being *openminded* to the difference, which one could possibly argue allows for the *experiencing* of cultural difference, as described by Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003).

Although the remaining aspects of intercultural sensitivity are defined differently among teachers, parents and students, there are similarities in the terminology connecting to the Chen (1997) definition. Chen (1997) discusses a *positive emotion* towards *understanding* and *appreciating* cultural difference. Similarly, teachers denote a *curiosity* and *understanding* of difference. Parents convey *respecting* and *embracing* the difference, while students imply having *empathy* and *embracing* the difference.

It is interesting to note that students are the only stakeholder group to expand upon the definitions of intercultural sensitivity to include the aspect of having an *awareness of one's own culture*. Paige (2009) discusses this same idea, calling it “learning about the self as a cultural being” as one of six dimensions of intercultural learning, but does not specifically tie it to intercultural sensitivity, as students do. This dimension refers to the culture in which one is raised and how it contributes to individual identities, patterns of behavior, values and ways of thinking. Although speaking about intercultural competence and not specifically sensitivity, Paige (2009) argues that this is a foundational element of intercultural competence because understanding one's own culture makes it easier to recognize differences in cultures and be more prepared and successful in intercultural interactions with those of a different culture.

**DMIS Model.** Views expressed by all three stakeholder groups of teachers, parents and students indicate that the more exposure one has to different cultures, the more interculturally sensitive one becomes. The theoretical model used to frame this study is Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS),

which is a developmental model of intercultural competence and constructivist learning theory.

Developmental models like the DMIS recognize that intercultural sensitivity develops over time, through a progression and stages from ethnocentric to ethnorelative. The model also presumes that as a person has more interactions with representatives of other cultures, their level of intercultural sensitivity advances to a more mature level of sophistication (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Findings from this study support this view, as well as the Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) view that indicates the more experience one has with difference, the more interculturally sensitive one becomes. Aligning to the theoretical framework for this study of constructivist learning theory, findings also indicate that individual factors and external factors influence this development of intercultural sensitivity, similar to other types of learning in a school.

**Significant cultural life experience.** Study findings indicate that intercultural sensitivity is developed through a significant cultural life experience or experiences that immerse one into a different culture. As described by the teachers, parents and students, being forced into a new unfamiliar culture, such as a move to a new country, one learns how to navigate new cultural norms and daily life in a new country. A student going through this type of experience appears to provoke a movement of one's intercultural sensitivity from the ethnocentric stages of denial, defense or minimization to more ethnorelative stages of acceptance, adaptation and integration (Bennett, 1993). This view supports prior literature (Bennett, 2013; Walker, 2006, Vande Berg et al., 2009) highlighting the significance of the positive effect of intercultural experiences



intercultural sensitivity. Paige (1993) labels this, *cultural immersion* and although this experience causes psychological stress for the sojourner, it leads to increased intercultural sensitivity over time.

Although, teachers, parents and students recognize the relevance of exposure to difference as a successful factor in developing student intercultural sensitivity, study findings also indicate that exposure alone, is not enough to develop intercultural sensitivity. This view complements Walker's (2006), Vande Berg and Paige (2009), and J. Bennett (2009) research that states the development of intercultural sensitivity must in some way be facilitated.

**Parental influence.** Findings from this study, confirmed by teachers, parents and students views, indicate the influence of parents as an individual factor on a student's individual development of intercultural sensitivity. Teachers confirm the level of intercultural sensitivity of parents appears to be both a positive factor or a barrier, depending on the level of parent intercultural sensitivity. If parents internalize and model the aspects of intercultural sensitivity like recognizing difference, being open-minded, curious, respecting and embracing and other cultures, students are also more likely to do the same. Parents describe the influence of their values on student intercultural sensitivity, while students describe the guidance parents provide in guiding students. This study's findings also indicate, parents also indirectly influence a student's development in a positive direction through intercultural family experiences. Family trips to diverse parts of the world and a return to a student's home culture are all positive factors related to the influence of parents on a student's development of intercultural sensitivity.

**Contact with home culture.** Also connected to parental influence, because they most likely coordinate it, a student's trip back to their home culture or country is also a factor that leads to increased intercultural sensitivity. Through the trip "back home" students appear to gain a realization of the new increased intercultural sensitivity they have developed while they were abroad. This view is supported by both parents and students in both focus groups and individual follow up interviews. This finding also supports what students said when defining intercultural sensitivity. Student views point to the awareness of one's own culture as a factor in becoming more interculturally sensitive.

**Diverse Friends.** Students discuss the influence of diverse friends on their development of intercultural sensitivity, citing numerous examples of how this plays out within the environment of an international school and outside of the school. Although not an explicit factor described by parents or teachers, their comments could also implicitly suggest the value of diverse friendships on the development of intercultural sensitivity. These findings support the Pettigrew (2008) research which found that friendship fosters empathy and reduces prejudice in intercultural interactions. Pettigrew (2008) found that empathy and perspective taking, leading to intercultural sensitivity gained through exploring new knowledge about others, affects attitudes and reduces anxiety. Deardorff (2008) also describes the intercultural sensitivity is developed through "meaningful interactions with those from different cultures (p. 45).

**Motivation to learn about other cultures.** Study findings also appear to indicate one's motivation to learn more about other cultures and people is an individual factor leading to increased intercultural sensitivity. If a student displays a motivation to

meet those from other cultures or engage with them in conversation to learn more, this motivation appears to equate to an individual factor responsible for the development of intercultural sensitivity. Similarly, in describing an interculturally competent student, Deardorff's (2008) Delphi study of 23 internationally known intercultural scholars found that curiosity and discovery of other cultures were considered an element of intercultural competence with 80 – 100% agreement among scholars (p. 34). J. Bennett (2008) also describes that in addition to curiosity, initiative and risk taking, motivation is an affective competency of intercultural sensitivity.

### **Implications for Leadership and Practice**

Where a large group of students from different nationalities, cultures and language groups come together in one common learning space, like China Intercultural School, and intercultural sensitivity is a part of the school mission, the findings of this study are helpful in informing leadership practice in schools. Heyward (2002) argues that the type of cross-cultural context that exists in an international school like China Intercultural School, is where intercultural sensitivity is best developed. This is because cross-cultural contact stimulates and forces learning. However, as Paige (1993b), Bennett (2013) and Pusch (2009) confirm, contact alone is not enough to facilitate intercultural sensitivity and something more than contact is necessary. Walker's (2006), Vande Berg and Paige (2009), and J. Bennett (2009) states the development of intercultural sensitivity must in some way be facilitated. Likewise, teachers, parents and students also recognize the relevance of exposure to difference as a successful factor in

developing student intercultural sensitivity, and study findings also indicate that exposure alone, is not enough to develop intercultural sensitivity.

This appears to suggest that students may not obtain intercultural sensitivity in an international school without a focused, intentional and strategic effort by leadership to help facilitate it. For intercultural contact to be beneficial in the development of intercultural sensitivity, certain conditions must be present. Bennett (2013) advises that through focused training and systematic educational efforts students can develop an intercultural mind-set, skill-set and sensitivity. Paige (1993a) lends further support arguing that planned programming has the potential to promote mutual understanding. Therefore, for schools with an intercultural mission, understanding exactly how to focus this effort could be beneficial for leaders. This study's findings provide leaders with some evidence that could help guide this effort.

**Natural unforced activities.** Findings of this study indicate that the most successful efforts in school to develop student intercultural sensitivity are best accomplished through natural unforced activities that students can self-select into. For example, teachers, parents and students described the success of co-curricular activities. Although not cited by teachers, parents and students described the impact of community building events, such as the international food fair, that contribute to building a strong school community and connection to diverse school stakeholders.

**Co-curricular activities.** Study findings indicate that co-curricular activities such as participation in sports, clubs and activities are institutional factors that influence the development of student intercultural sensitivity. Co-curricular activities appear to

provide a structure and opportunity for diverse students to come together around a common interest that they opt into, rather than being forced. This finding complements a Fennes and Hapgood (1997) study that found planning multiple opportunities for social learning between individuals and groups is a strategy for facilitating intercultural learning in an international school. The finding is also similar to an aspect of the Engle and Engle (2003) American University Center of Provence study abroad program that encouraged student intercultural learning by placing students in homestays, service agencies and sports teams that required students to develop their intercultural communication skills in a setting with individuals from the host country.

***Flags, Food and Festivals.*** Study findings indicate how school community events such as the international food fair, Chinese New Year celebration and school carnival influence the development of student intercultural sensitivity. This was a view expressed by teachers, parents and students, in both focus groups and individual follow-up interviews. Students perceive these type of community events as a fun and safe way to experience cultural differences. Students enjoy sampling food from the different countries and participating in crafts or games. Students and parents also remark that as much as the events helps make culture more visible, it is also the process of preparing for these events that increases the opportunity for the development of intercultural sensitivity. The preparation process causes different teachers, parents and students from different countries and social circles to come together and interact in a casual nonthreatening way. As Bennett and Bennett (2004) discuss, interculturalists tend to be dismissive of such “flags, food and festival” events leading to the development of

intercultural sensitivity. However, as Bennett and Bennett (2004) also say, “there is a place for this sort of activity...such efforts bring cultural into consciousness” (p. 160). Although community events such as this may not be the only source for facilitating the development of student intercultural sensitivity, they do serve a purpose and should be considered for their value by school leaders.

**Organizational practice and policies.** Findings from this study, specifically teacher focus group and individual interviews, point to the unintended consequences of school practice and policies on the development of student intercultural sensitivity, namely, admissions and hiring practices. Also shared by teachers, and validated by the views of parents and students, a diverse student body is an institutional factor that influences the development of intercultural sensitivity. These views match what Bolman and Deal (2008) discuss when describing the structural frame of organizations. The architecture of an organization, influences what happens in the organization. In other words, the structures, policies and practices influence the function of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008). This appears to be the case at China Intercultural School, related to the development of student intercultural sensitivity. There are two practices highlighted by stakeholders and discussed below that are worthy of consideration. Given that China Intercultural School is a global organization, as Bolman and Deal (2008) argue, “pressures of globalization, competition, technology, customer expectations...have prompted organizations worldwide to rethink and redesign structural prototypes” (p. 51).

***Admissions practices.*** While the importance of contact and being in the presence with those who are different has been well established by numerous prior studies

(Bennett; 1993; Dalib, Harun, & Yusoff; 2014) for the facilitation of intercultural sensitivity, where this study may add to the literature is how this contact plays out within the environment of an international school. With the apparent value placed on a diverse student body, which allows for casual intercultural contact between students, an examination of a school's admission practices are relevant. Findings appear to indicate that for a school leader hoping to impact student intercultural sensitivity, strategically admitting students of diverse nationalities is of value. As international schools begin to attract a more host culture population, as is the case at China Intercultural School, school leaders will need to consider the best balance of host country students with other international students. For example some international schools such as the United Nations International School in Hanoi, Vietnam follow an admissions policy where "no single nationality may exceed 20% of the total student enrollment" and there is an effort to maintain cultural diversity within each grade level (United Nations International School Admission Policy, n.d.).

***Hiring practices.*** Related to a diverse student body being relevant for influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity, study findings also indicate the value of a diverse teaching staff. Teachers described how a diverse teaching staff can bring an international perspective to the school community and school practices. Similarly, students and parents discussed how teachers with different nationalities have the potential to bring diverse perspectives into the classroom, influencing texts they might read or how to approach strategy differently on the sports field. Although, China Intercultural School is limited by Chinese immigration policy on who they can hire and from what countries,

there is value in examining a school's hiring practice for the development of student intercultural sensitivity. Similar to other international schools, China Intercultural School cooperates with recruiting agencies primarily based in the USA. These recruiting agencies naturally attract a majority of teacher candidates from Canada, the USA, the U.K, Australia and New Zealand. This study's findings indicate that there a diverse teaching staff is a factor in developing student intercultural sensitivity. Therefore, there appears to be some value in examining school recruiting practices for increased opportunities to attract a more diverse and international teaching staff. Although teachers expressed the lack of confidence in being able to intentionally facilitate intercultural sensitivity lessons or program, their mere presence of being from a different country may allow for the potential of bringing a different perspective to the classroom and viewed as valuable. Based on efforts to bring consistency to curriculum and instructional practices, international schools similar to China Intercultural School tend to hire teachers who have knowledge and experience in certain curricular programs. This is often based on the desire to create a vertically aligned and articulated curriculum.

**Contact with host culture.** Contact with host culture through class trips at China Intercultural School is viewed as a factor influencing a positive development of student intercultural sensitivity. Connecting to the analogous undergraduate study abroad literature, this finding supports an Engle and Engle (2003) finding on what constitutes a positive study aboard experience for the development of intercultural sensitivity. Engle and Engle (2003) state, "interaction with the host culture is finally what separates study abroad from study at home (p. 4). Engle and Engle (2003) also describe the success of



linking students with direct experiences with host culture and exposing students to the cultures, cultural life patterns through “direct, authentic, cultural encounters and guided reflection upon those encounters (p. 6). Parents, teachers and students discussed the value of school trips either through *China Alive* experiences or athletic trips to competitions in other countries that brought students closer with people of the host culture. These trips allow students to experience difference first hand and as described by students, it allows cultural learning to be less abstract.

**International Baccalaureate (IB) Framework.** Study results indicate that the structure of the IB Language and Literature class at China Intercultural School creates an opportunity to integrate instructional practices that influence the development of student intercultural sensitivity. This is a finding reflected in the views of both teachers and students. It appears that because of the flexibility a literature class, such as the IB Language and Literature class provides, it is easier to integrate diverse texts and resources that allow for alternative viewpoints to be shared with students. Based on these findings, it appears there is some value in considering the IB program as a framework for facilitating intercultural sensitivity. Although the IB program does not profess to specifically promote intercultural sensitivity, an overarching concept that is embedded across all of its programs is *international mindedness*. The IB conceptualizes international mindedness around the core categories of multilingualism, global engagement and intercultural understanding. Some parallels of the IB conceptualization of international mindedness can be drawn to intercultural sensitivity, mainly in the category of intercultural understanding where the IB describes this category as being

composed of intercultural competence, intercultural citizenship and intercultural dialogue (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2013, p. 9). Although there is no specific curriculum for the facilitation of international mindedness from the IB, they do encourage schools and teachers to integrate an international mindedness approach in all that they do (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2013, p. 5).

### **Limitations of the Study**

Firstly, this study was conducted in only one specific school in China with a representative sample of high school teachers, parents and students. Although it is assumed that these stakeholder participants are a viable representative sample of many similar international school stakeholders around the world, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the views expressed by these participants to other international schools. The study's findings only reflect the views of high school teachers, parents and students at this particular school in China. Their views regarding the development of student intercultural sensitivity can only be linked to their own life experiences, cultures and histories, as well as their experience at Chinese Intercultural School. Because of this, these stakeholders may not be aware of strategies or factors in other schools that could successfully and equally lead to the development of student intercultural sensitivity. Additionally, the study does not consider the views of middle school and elementary school parents, teachers, students or school administrators.

Secondly, a small sample size limits the power of this research's findings. This sample also represents only the diversity and views of the nationality groups represented at this school. Although CIS has a diverse student body, there are other international

schools with more or less diversity among its teachers, parents and students. More cultural diversity in the focus interview groups could potentially increase the richness of views expressed by teachers, parents and students. Moreover, the views of administrators are not considered in this study. Administrators who serve in a leadership role have the most potential to influence practice and student learning (Marzano, Waters, McNulty, 2005). Therefore, their views could potentially add another level of comparison, adding value to this study's findings.

Thirdly, it may be difficult for stakeholders to identify with one particular nationality group. Stakeholders may identify with more than only one nationality if socialized in more than one country or live in a bi-lingual home. Because of this, it is difficult to draw comparisons between stakeholder groups based on nationality alone. In line with this idea, the study is primarily framed and grounded in a western perspective on intercultural sensitivity. The study was conducted in China and a majority of the participants interviewed were Asian. There is a lack of Asian intercultural communication theoretical research used to support or frame this study. As Miike (2014) argues, an Asia centricity is lacking in the intercultural communication research and has the opportunity to open up new understandings of intercultural communication (p. 112).

### **Future Research**

Understanding the development of student intercultural sensitivity is a topic that can be further explored through future research. The findings of this study point to several potential research possibilities which are discussed below.

**Student intercultural sensitivity.** Qualitative data from this study suggests that international high school students may have a higher level of intercultural sensitivity than their teachers and parents. In this study, high school teachers, parents and students all indicated this. Following up on what they stated, a future study integrating the quantitative piece of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) could help discover if international school students are, in fact, more interculturally sensitive compared to their teachers and parents. Although not able to corroborate what participants from this study state, there are a couple of studies that are related to this claim. A Straffon (2003) study of 336, ninth – 12<sup>th</sup> grade students from over 40 countries in a large Southeast Asian international school found 97% of the students were in the *acceptance* or *adaptation* stages of the DMIS. However, there was no comparison to parents or teachers in this study. Another study that could provide some evidence to support teacher, parent and student views on this idea is a Steuernagel (2014) study of 334 school counselors in international schools. The Steuernagel (2014) study using the IDI, found 67% of school counselors were in the middle to late *minimization* stage of the DMIS. Further understanding of the various levels of intercultural sensitivity of international school students could help clarify student needs for the development of intercultural sensitivity, or on the other hand, what training might be relevant for international school teachers to more confidently serve in the role of intercultural mentor.

**Intercultural mentorship.** Data from the study suggest that teachers do not have the confidence to serve as an intercultural mentor or teacher of intercultural sensitivity for international high school students. Teachers stated that in order to serve in this type of

role, they would require additional professional training. Their view matches with what Vande Berg and Paige (2009) said when describing the Bennett and Bennett (2004) intercultural training paradigm. Vande Berg and Paige (2009) stated, “individuals need some form of education, training and mentoring to become interculturally competent” (p. 423). These findings are also not surprising given what Cushner and Mahon (2009) and Goode (2008) conclude in studies about educator preparation programs and the lack of emphasis on intercultural sensitivity. Integrating intercultural sensitivity training into teacher preparations programs has always been difficult due to tightly controlled program content and requirements. Although Cushner and Mahon (2009) argue for teacher preparation programs to include more attention to intercultural sensitivity training, through impactful intercultural experiences, it doesn’t appear that the international experiences of teachers at China Intercultural School have made a difference in their confidence to help foster intercultural sensitivity among their students. Future research related to effective teacher preparation for the development of teacher intercultural sensitivity may be of value to further understand what factors can help teachers best serve in the role of intercultural sensitivity mentor and teacher.

**Different regional views.** As was cited as a weakness of this study, the findings of this study are limited to only China Intercultural School. To further understand the factors influencing the development student intercultural sensitivity in an international school, it could be of value to conduct a similar study in a series of different international schools, located in different regions of the world. This type of study could allow for comparisons to the findings of this study and understand how much or how little they are

influenced by the context of the location in which the study was conducted. As was mentioned, this study was conducted in China and influenced by the Asian context. Because China Intercultural School is affiliated with The East Asia Regional Council of School (EARCOS), a similar study could be conducted in an international school or schools in the Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools (NESA), Association of American Schools in South America (AASSA), Educational Collaborative of International Schools (ECIS) or in an American school within the United States. As critiqued by Yep (2014), there are other ways to view and understand intercultural sensitivity. Yep (2014) proposes searching for views that don't always assume the "U.S. American, White, middle-class culture as the center, or ideal order against which other cultures are measured and judged" (p. 339). Such a proposed study supports Yep's (2014) view and could also integrate the Muslim (Mowlanda, 2014) and African (Asante, 2014) worldview of intercultural sensitivity into the intercultural communications conversation.

**Language classes.** Students indicated that language classes are an institutional factor that influences the positive development of student intercultural sensitivity. Students described it's both the scheduling of how language classes naturally bring diverse students together and the act of learning a language are positive influencers. A majority of international schools operate host country language programs. For example, China Intercultural School operates a Chinese program K-8 where all students attend Chinese class. This is followed by optional Chinese language classes in high school. Paige and Goode (2009) state that in an intercultural experience a person who is not able

to speak the host countries language will find the experience more stressful. Therefore, this finding appears to demonstrate the value for language offerings as a possible way to help develop a student's intercultural sensitivity. Exploring the significance of the classes on the development of student intercultural sensitivity could be of further interest and it's results relevant for international school leaders.

**Third Culture Kids.** A majority of the student participants in this study could technically qualify as being labeled a Third Culture Kid (TCK). Due to their unique upbringing, TCK's make for an interesting research topic and more research that leads to understanding their experience and them as people is of value to international school leaders. It is of value, because many of the students in international schools are TCK's. Therefore, understanding what makes them unique and their needs may help the school leader understand and gain empathy to enhance their learning experience in school. Although this study was not framed around the TCK literature, a study framed around the TCK experience and factors influencing their development of intercultural sensitivity could add to the TCK literature and also help guide international school leaders.

## **Conclusion**

The development of intercultural sensitivity is a lifelong journey influenced by several individual and institutional factors. As Bennett (1993) says, one is not born being interculturally sensitive, but has the opportunity to become more interculturally sensitive as one gains more experience through intercultural experiences and interactions.

The results of this study provide information to school leaders at China Intercultural School about the individual and instructional factors influencing the

development of student intercultural sensitivity at their school. While these results are specific to this particular school, the results may help other school leaders at similar international schools understand what factors influence student intercultural sensitivity.

As Walker (2006) argues, many international schools are founded on a set of ideals associated with intercultural sensitivity, which is also reflected in their mission statements. In addition to claiming their desire to promote and facilitate intercultural sensitivity, these schools are also often free from specific curricular demands and bureaucracy placed on them by national governments. Therefore, international schools have the potential to serve as exemplars for the development of student intercultural sensitivity in a global society. It is the hope that the findings from this study will help international school educators with this effort.



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## Appendix A

### Focus Group Interview Questions

**Focus Group Participants:** High School Teachers, High School Parents, High School Students

**Time:** 90 minutes

**Objective:** To examine teacher, parent or student views of the factors influencing the development of student intercultural sensitivity at an international school in China.

**Supplies Used:** computer, recording software, notepad, notecard, pens, research folder

1. Please share with the group your name, grade and where you consider yourself to be from? If relevant, please also share what countries you have lived/studied/worked in besides China.
2. Today we are going to be talking about <i>intercultural sensitivity</i> . I'm interested in getting your views on how this is developed at this school, China Intercultural School (CIS). Some experts define intercultural sensitivity as, "the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural difference" (Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman, 2013). Some also believe that the more experience one gains with cultural differences, the more interculturally sensitive one becomes. However, today I am interested in your views. How would you define <i>intercultural sensitivity</i> ?
3. In your opinion, how does <i>intercultural sensitivity</i> develop?
4. In your opinion, what does this school, China Intercultural School do to influence the development of a student's <i>intercultural sensitivity</i> ? Can you give me some specific examples? ( <i>Probes: curriculum, assignments, activities, people, etc.</i> )
5. What are the barriers to the development of student <i>intercultural sensitivity</i> at CIS?
6. What more could be done to develop student <i>intercultural sensitivity</i> at CIS? Are there opportunities?
7. What has contributed to your own development of <i>intercultural sensitivity</i> ? Can you give me an example of what was perhaps the most influential and transformative experience?
8. What are the personal factors that influence the development of a student's <i>intercultural sensitivity</i> ?
9. What is the most important idea we talked about today regarding the development of student <i>intercultural sensitivity</i> at CIS?
10. Is there anything that we may have missed that you would like to share about the development of student <i>intercultural sensitivity</i> at CIS?